

Dramatic 5-4 win over Vandy advances Blue Raiders in tourney

Meinhart, Dennis hit home runs to guide team

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. - Middle Tennessee won its first game in the NCAA Louisville Regional in dramatic fashion defeating in-state rival Vanderbilt 5-4 on Friday afternoon. The Blue Raiders (44-16) led throughout the game but the Commodores (34-26) closed the gap to one in the eighth inning and held on for the win. "It is a great win. All of the wins are great from here on out because we are trying to win this tournament and the next to get to Omaha. I am very proud of this team but to compete like they have the last month it doesn't surprise me. I have said all week the last column on the scoreboard would be the most important because I didn't anticipate Kenny striking out a lot of batters," Peterson said. Junior Coty Woods entered the game in the eighth with a runner on base and picked up his 15th save of the season after allowing one run



on two hits in two innings of work. Junior Kenneth Roberts earned the win, improving to 11-1, working seven innings allowing three runs on six hits. "Kenny had one inning where he lost command and there were pitches Kenny and his catcher thought were strikes and the man making the decision didn't. He does walk people but he walked more than normal today," head coach Steve Peterson said. "Coty was not sharp at all but when someone has 14 saves you will bet the house that they will come back with pitches and that is what he did." Junior Stuart Meinhart had one of two big hits for the Blue Raiders as he hit the second grand slam of his career to put them up 4-0 in the first inning. Meinhart ended the game 1 for 3 with four RBI and scored a run. Senior Taylor Dennis

had the other big hit for the team as he hit a solo shot down the left field line to give the Blue Raiders the extra run they needed. Junior Blake McDade had a big day at the plate as he was one of two players to have multiple hits in the game. McDade went 3 for 4 with a double and scored a run. As a team, Middle Tennessee posted 10 hits with four of those being for extra bases. "We had never faced Minor but I have seen him pitch since he was in high school. The first two or three innings he was not very good and had the ball up. We knew he was going to throw strikes so we anticipated that if he wasn't right we were going to have to get on him quick," Peterson said. "Stuart got a fastball up and the wind was blowing out. Stuart has hit balls out to right field and is a good fastball hitter and then we could have easily picked up a couple more runs had we executed better on the bases." Vanderbilt's Mike Minor took the loss on the mound as he worked a complete game allowing five runs on 10 hits with seven strikeouts. At the plate, Aaron Westlake went 3 for 4 with a double and scored two runs. The Commodores had eight hits on the day with three extra base hits. It is the fifth straight win for the Blue Raiders and their first in an NCAA Regional appearance since 2000 when they defeated Illinois 4-3 in the Clemson Regional. The Blue Raiders broke the game open early thanks to a grand slam to right field by Meinhart. Vanderbilt loaded the bases after Bishop received a four pitch walk with runners at first and second. Middle Tennessee ended the bottom of the first scoring four runs with four hits in the inning to take a 4-0 lead. Vanderbilt scored its first run in the fourth after a runner from third scored on a groundball to second base. The Commodores added another run on a single down the left field line bringing in a runner from third. VU ended the inning scoring two runs on two hits to cut the Blue Raider lead to two, 4-2. Dennis hit a solo shot down the left field line in the seventh to add another run to score and put the Blue Raiders up by three. Vanderbilt added a run of its own in the eighth on a groundball to the shortstop bringing in a runner from third. Then a groundball to second brought in another Commodore run cutting the Blue Raider lead to one, 5-4. The Blue Raiders will be back in action on Saturday, May 30 at 6 p.m. when it faces the winner of one seed Louisville and four seed Indiana.

Ticket Information

Tickets for Middle Tennessee's game on Saturday, May 30 will go on sale immediately following the Louisville vs. Indiana game Friday night. Contact the Louisville ticket office or check uoflsports.com for ordering tickets on-line.

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