Raiders Drop 9-8 Decision to USA

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - South Alabama scored two unearned runs in the ninth and reliever Adam Wood struck out a career-high 11 batters in 7.1 innings, leading the Jaguars to a 9-8 victory over Middle Tennessee on a blustery, windy and sometimes rainy Saturday afternoon at Reese Smith Field.

With the game tied at seven and the rain falling steadily in the ninth, South Alabama's Quendon Montgomery singled with one out, his fourth hit of the day. A walk put two runners on with two outs before a slow ground ball to short, where Jeff Beachum's throw to first was low and in the dirt.

Montgomery never broke stride and scored easily. A passed ball allowed the second run of the inning to score, giving South Alabama a 9-7 lead.

Nate Jaggers belted his 10th homer of the season to leadoff the bottom of the ninth, cutting it to a one-run deficit.

Michael McKenry reached on a throwing error with one out and moved to second on the overthrow. Nathan Hines then singled, but Montgomery gunned down McKenry at the plate. Chase Christianson came on to get the final out of the contest for his fifth save, tying the series at one heading into Sunday.

Wood (2-2) worked 7.1 innings, allowing two runs on five hits with the career-high 11 strikeouts. Middle Tennessee's Kyler Wetherington (0-1) suffered the loss, giving up the two unearned runs on two hits.

The Jaguars got off to a fast start with six runs in the first on four hits and three walks.

Ben Froemming drew a leadoff walk and David Freese walked with one out. After the second strikeout of the inning, Aaron George blooped a single into rightcenter, plating a run, before an RBI single to right from Josh Stapleton.

Joel Collins doubled off the wall in leftcenter, scoring two runs, before a two-out walk to Jeff Morris. Guillermo Martinez then tripled off the chalk down the rightfield line, scoring two runs, for a 6-0 USA advantage.

Middle Tennessee came back with two runs in the bottom of the inning and could have added more.

Eric McNamee and Todd Martin both walked to leadoff and a soft single to left from Jaggers loaded the bases. Marcus Taylor's sacrifice fly to left scored a run before a walk to Michael McKenry loaded the bases again and chased USA starter Tommie Major.

Hines plated the second run with another sacrifice fly. Beachum loaded the bases again with an infield single, but Chase Eakes struck out to end the inning.

The Blue Raiders cut into the deficit again in the second with a leadoff single from Josh Archer and a walk by McNamee. Martin loaded the bases with a chopper over the third baseman's head.

Taylor plated a run with an infield single before McKenry scored two runs with a single to rightfield. Beachum's line drive to center tied the game at six.

The game was delayed 19 minutes before the bottom of the fourth because of a hail storm.

Neither team mustered much offense until the sixth when Morris singled to leadoff and moved to second on a bunt from Martinez. Tyler Jones singled through the middle with two outs, his first hit of the series, scoring Morris. After a walk, Montgomery singled to right, but Taylor's throw to the plate nailed Jones to keep it a one-run contest.

The Blue Raiders finally got to Wood in the seventh, with Hines singling up the middle with two outs and stealing second. Beachum followed with a single through the middle, scoring the run and tying the game at seven.

Jaggers, Hines, Beachum and Archer all had two hits in the contest, with Taylor, McKenry and Beachum each driving in two runs.

Major lasted one-third of an inning for the Jaguars, allowing two runs on one hit with three walks. Blue Raider starter Eric Blevins settled down after the shaky first inning, working into the sixth and giving up seven runs on 11 hits with six strikeouts.

The rubber game of the series starts Sunday at 1 p.m. at Reese Smith Field.

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