Raiders Fall in Finale, 10-8

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Florida International scored eight runs in the first four innings, including a pair of three-run homers, and held on for a 10-8 victory over Middle Tennessee Sunday afternoon at Reese Smith Field. The visiting Panthers (31-18, 9-9 Sun Belt) got three-run shots from Nick Cadena and Michael Lopez in the first and second innings, respectively, but held just a 6-5 lead after two frames. Yahmed Yema's two-run single in the fourth gave FIU an 8-5 edge, and the visitors stretched to lead to 10-5 with single runs in the fifth and sixth. Middle Tennessee's Michael McKenry belted three homers in the game, including two-run shots in the first and seventh, and a solo homer in the ninth. The three-homer game is the first for a Blue Raider since Justin Sims went deep three times on April 6, 2002, at New Mexico State. The catcher went 4-for-5 with a career-high five RBIs and three runs scored in the contest. FIU's Luiz Rivera had three of his team's 13 hits in the contest, while Dennis Diaz, Lopez and Yema all added a pair of hits. Lopez, Yema and Cadena all had three RBIs in the victory for the Panthers, who salvaged the final game of the series after Middle Tennessee wins on Friday and Saturday. FIU's Chris Siebenaler (2-0), the second Panthers hurler, picked up the victory with 2.1 innings of work, allowing two runs on five hits with one strikeout. Frank Gonzalez, who threw 59 pitches in Saturday's game, worked three innings to get his second save, giving up a run on one hit with a strikeout. FIU starter Elih Villanueva allowed five runs on six hits in 3.2 innings, walking three and striking out two. Blue Raider starter Chase Swing (1-2) last just 1.1 innings to take the loss, allowing five runs on five hits, walking one and striking out one. Jeff Kasser was the first of five relievers, giving up three runs on four hits in 2.1 innings and walking one. The Panthers scored first with four hits in the first inning, starting with a one-out double from Bryan Pullin. Yema drew a two-out walk before Cadena's three-run homer just cleared the wall in leftfield for an early 3-0 lead. The Blue Raiders (23-20, 9-8) came back with two runs in the bottom of the inning, both with two outs. Nate Jaggers singled over the third base bag with two outs, and McKenry belted his ninth home run of the season on a hanging curveball, cutting the deficit to 3-2. But FIU came back with three more runs in the second, chasing Swing from the contest. Rivera led off with a double and Pullin was hit after a sacrifice bunt. Lopez greeted Kasser with a three-run homer to right, his fifth of the season,

for a 6-2 Panthers lead. Again the Blue Raiders came right back with two-out runs, scoring three times in the bottom of the inning. Adam Warren doubled with two outs, tying Justin Sims for the longest hitting streak by a Blue Raider since 1999 at 15 games. Josh Archer walked and Eric McNamee singled home a run inside the third base bag. Adam Darby followed with a double to leftcenter, scoring Archer and McNamee and cutting the FIU lead to 6-5. Rivera singled to leadoff the FIU fourth, and Diaz followed with a bunt single. Pullin moved both runners with a sacrifice bunt before Lopez walked to load the bases. Yema's two-run single up the middle gave the visitors an 8-5 advantage. Corey Lozano was hit to leadoff the FIU fifth and moved to second on a sacrifice bunt by Danny Marquez. Rivera singled to put runners on the corners, and Lozano scored on a Diaz sacrifice fly for a 9-5 Panthers lead. Yema's solo homer just inside the rightfield foul pole gave FIU a 10-5 edge in the sixth. The Blue Raiders finally got to Siebenaler in the seventh, with Jaggers reaching on an infield single before McKenry's second homer of the game, a two-run shot to cut the deficit to 10-7. McKenry hit his third round-tripper of the game with one out in the ninth, but it was too little too late for the Blue Raiders. Jaggers had two hits and scored twice, while Nathan Hines singled twice and Warren collected a pair of doubles. The Blue Raiders host Lipscomb Tuesday at 7 p.m. and head to Vanderbilt Wednesday for a 6 p.m. contest. **GAME NOTES**

Nate Jaggers extended his hitting streak to 13 games, tying his career-long, with an infield single in the first ... Adam Warren extended his career-long hitting streak to 15 games with a double in the second. It matches the longest streak by a Blue Raider since 1999 (Justin Sims, 2001) ... Michael McKenry hit three home runs in the game, the first Blue Raider to hit three homers in a contest since Justin Sims at New Mexico State on April 6, 2002. McKenry also had a career-high five RBIs and tied his career-high with three runs scored ... Jeff Beachum's career-long 12-game hitting streak came to an end with an 0-for-5 performance.

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