Cajuns Pound Out 23 Hits in 16-3 Victory

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LAFAYETTE, La. - Middle Tennessee and Louisiana-Lafayette sat through more than two hours of rain delays, but it was the 18th-ranked Cajuns day from the start, with the home team pounding out 23 hits in defeating the Blue Raiders, 16-3, Saturday afternoon. The game took more than six-and-a-half hours with 2:17 of rain delays mixed in during the fourth inning. The Cajuns led 6-2 when the rains hit and scored seven runs in the seventh and eighth innings to even the best-of-three series at one. UL leadoff hitter John Coker went 4-for-6 with five RBIs and three runs scored, including a pair of triples. Every starter in the Cajuns lineup recorded multiple hits, with Jonathan Lucroy and Micah Cockrell both collecting three hits. Cockrell and Phillip Hawke both scored three times in the victory for UL. Thad Montgomery (2-1) worked four-plus innings of relief, allowing one run on hits four and striking out three. UL starter Austin Faught gave up one earned run on five hits in 3.1 innings before the rains hit, walking three and striking out one. Middle Tennessee starter Tyler Copeland (4-4) suffered the loss, giving up four runs in seven hits in two-plus innings. Eric Blevins worked 4.2 innings of relief, allowing the Blue Raiders to use just three pitchers in the contest. The Raiders jumped out early again with a run in the first inning, starting with an infield single from Adam Warren. Warren went to second on a throwing error and stole third before a chopper up the middle by Nate Jaggers plated the run for a 1-0 advantage. The Cajuns went ahead with two runs in the second and it could have been more. Lucroy singled to leadoff and Alex Preciado followed with a single. Middle Tennessee got an out after a bad sacrifice bunt attempt, but Hawke singled to right. Preciado tried to score from second on the play, but a perfect one-hop throw from Marcus Taylor nailed the runner. But UL got on the board with an RBI single from Justin Morgan, past a diving Jeff Beachum into leftfield, and Coker's line drive fell out of the glove of a diving Taylor in shallow rightfield, plating another run for a 2-1 Cajuns lead. The Raiders tied the game in the top of the third and just missed taking the lead again. Eric McNamee reached on an error to leadoff and Warren walked. After a flyout and a lineout, Beachum blooped a single into short leftfield, scoring McNamee and tying the contest. Nathan Hines walked to load the bases before Josh Archer gave a 1-1 pitch a ride to deep leftcenter, but Coker ran it down just short of the wall for the third out. Tthe home team took

advantage of a walk and a costly error in the bottom of the inning for four runs. Josh Landry led off with a single and Dallas Morris walked, chasing Copeland from the contest. Lucroy grounded to short, but Beachum picked his head up as the ball reached him and it went right between his legs, allowing a run to score and runners to move to the corners. Preciado's sacrifice fly plated Morris before Cockrell belted a high fastball to the opposite field and over the rightfield wall for a two-run homer, giving UL a 6-2 lead. A one-hour and 33-minute rain delay in the top of the fourth and another 44-minute rain delay in the bottom of the inning added up to a 2-hour and 40-minute fourth inning, with UL adding two more runs. Coker singled and Merendino walked before a sacrifice bunt from Landry. Morris drove in a run with a sacrifice fly and Lucroy's grounder through the leftside plated Merendino for an 8-3 Cajuns advantage. Merendino's two-out single in the fifth scored Hawke from second for a 9-2 UL lead. Coker's three-run triple in the seventh scored Cockrell, Hawke and Morgan, with Coker scoring on the play after an overthrow into the dugout. Hines singled home pinch-runner Jeff Kasser in the eighth for the Blue Raiders third run of the contest. Coker's second triple and fourth hit of the game in the bottom of the eighth plated Morgan, and pinch-hitter Ray Dees singled up the middle to score Coker. Landry's single scored Dees for the final run of the contest. "It was a long day for both teams. [UL] had the lead, kept the lead and just wore us out," head coach Steve Peterson said. "I left [Eric] Blevins out there longer than I should, but it was a rough day all the way around." The two teams conclude the series Sunday at 1 p.m. The Blue Raiders return home to face New Mexico State in the final weekend series of the season at Reese Smith Field, May 20-22.

GAME NOTES

Nathan Hines extended his hitting streak to eight games with a single in the second ... Eric McNamee extended his hitting streak to seven games with a single in the seventh.

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