

Blue Raiders rally to beat in-state foe Memphis, 4-3

Raiders notch fifth consecutive season-opening victory

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. - The opening game of the season provided a fair amount of drama, as the Blue Raiders rallied in the eighth inning to defeat Memphis 4-3. It marked the fifth straight season-opening win for the Blue Raiders. Kenneth Roberts turned in a solid five innings, giving up two earned runs while issuing zero walks and striking out three. Nick Montgomery registered four strikeouts over three innings in relief, earning the win. Kevin Whittaker was credited with the save, picking up the final two outs. The Blue Raiders were led offensively by Bryce Brentz, who drew three walks on the day while going 1-2 at the plate with a run scored and a stolen base. Drew Robertson went 1-3 with a walk and a run batted in. Blake McDade provided two hits in five at bats and a run scored. Will Skinner and Ryan Ford accounted for the other runs scored, and Skinner also had an RBI. "It's a good win," said coach Steve Peterson. "It's a game that we literally stole from them. We got a steal of home and got big hit from Drew and another big hit from Skinner. It's always good to pick up a win at Memphis, and now we have a chance to win the series tomorrow." Middle Tennessee was out-hit on the day 9-7, but had four stolen bases and drew five walks. Memphis drew one walk on the day.



Memphis would strike first in the third inning after a pair of back-to-back singles from Tyler Huelsing

and Heith Hetfield to start off the inning. Huelsing would advance to third on a fielder's choice from Drew Martinez before ultimately scoring on a Chad Zurcher single. A double steal ultimately proved fruitless for the Tigers as Roberts forced a ground ball out to end the Memphis inning. The Tigers also notched the second run of the game in the following inning. Jacob Wilson reached base with a two-out single to right center, and a double by Huelsing scored the run to put Memphis up 2-0 after four innings. After leaving seven men on base through the first seven innings, the Blue Raiders broke into the scoring column in the eighth. McDade hopped on a pitch from Jonathan Jones for a double down the left field line. A wild pitch advanced McDade to third. Following a four-pitch walk of Brentz, Skinner singled to left field to score McDade. After a Tyler Burnett fly ball out to right field, Robertson singled to score Brentz. Stuart Meinhart reached base on a fielder's choice and advanced to third base. Middle Tennessee took the lead in the next at bat when Jones attempted to catch Meinhart stealing, allowing Skinner enough time to steal home for the lead. Memphis attempted a dramatic rally in the eighth, loading the bases with zero outs recorded in the inning. However, Nick Montgomery struck out two consecutive batters and drawing a ground ball out to escape the inning unharmed. The top of ninth featured more base-running prowess for the Blue Raiders. Ford earned a walk to lead off the inning. Ford stole second base as Justin Guidry struck out, and a passed ball allowed Ford to advance to third. Brentz earned his second walk in as many innings after a strike out by McDade. Brentz stole second, and Ford advanced home to put MT up 4-2 with a half an inning to play. Tyler Huelsing opened up the bottom of the ninth with a double down the right field line. Following a flyball out by Robby Graham, a Derrick Thomas single scored Huelsing to draw within one. Whittaker struck out Drew Martinez. A pinpoint throw from Robertson caught Thomas trying to steal to end the game. The Blue Raiders will continue their series against the Tigers tomorrow as freshman pitcher and Germantown native Daniel Palo is slated to make his Middle Tennessee debut at 2 p.m. at FedExPark in Memphis.

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