Softball splits doubleheader in UGA Tournament

Banania ties career high in RBI in opening win against Minnesota

March 5, 2010 · Christian Lemon

ATHENS, Ga. - Middle Tennessee split the opening day doubleheader of the Bulldog Invitational in Athens, Ga., knocking off Minnesota 10-2 in the opening game before falling to Elon 6-1 in the second contest.

It was the tail of opposite teams on defense for the Blue Raiders as the ladies played flawless error free ball in victory against Minnesota before allowing six errors in the loss to Elon.

"Overall, we saw the ball very well today," said head coach Sue Nevar. "The first game our bats came alive and we were making solid contact in the second game. Elon made some great catches to pull away some of our hits."

In the early contest, the squad peppered the Golden Gophers' pitcher Alissa Koch stoking nine hits for 10 runs.

Lindsey Vander Lugt came in bottom of the first inning after Caty Jutson gave up hits to the first three Golden Gopher opponents allowing one run on a hit. Minnesota added a second score on a double steal. Vander Lugt was brilliant after the first frame handily as she finished the game with 10 strikeouts in 5.0 innings with no earned runs and one base of ball as she moved to 2-4 with a 2.77 cumulative ERA for the season. Vander Lugt would later drop to 2-5 after the contest with Elon tossing three strikeouts in 4.0

Middle Tennessee showed a fight unseen this season, as the bats woke up in the top of the second scoring five runs with Brittney Banania, Caitlin McLure, Corrie Abel and Natalie Ysais all driving in runners for a five run Blue Raider frame. This was the most runs scored in an inning by the team to this point in the season. McLure took second in the team's own double steal giving her seven for the season and 51 for her career, putting her one behind Kim Blair for fourth most in school history with 52. She would add two more in the second contest to pass Blair.

Again in the fourth Middle Tennessee harassed Koch with Ysais, Popham, Kandra Singleton and

Banania tallying RBIs. Banania's three RBI set a career high for the San Pedro, Calif. native. She also tied a career high for hits with three.

Banania commented, "I have changed my swing from a slapper swing to a more regular swing. I saw the ball well and the pitcher was not making a lot of changes. We have to do this as a team from week to week to get better."

Unfortunately, the team was not able to carry the early game's momentum through to the second contest as the squad could not bring run across the plate with runners on base.

McLure scored the lone run for the team in the sixth inning off of a Ysais single. McLure tallied two hits in the game to go along with her two stolen bases.

Errors were the determining for the team, giving up four in the third inning to allow three Elon runs. The team gave up error six errors total for the game leading to five runs.

Nevar commented, "Our focus was not there in the second game like it was in the first game. We have to keep our heads and make the plays for outs. It was not a bad day for us. We hit well and had chances to win the second game."

The team will return to action tomorrow as they take on local rival Belmont at 12:15 p.m. with full livestats and coverage available at GoBlueRaiders.com.

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