Couch homer lifts softball to victory

Four RBIs on the day for Lebanon native

March 13, 2010 · Christian Lemon

CLEARWATER, Fla. - The Middle Tennessee softball team split their opening day doubleheader at the 2010 USF Under Armour Showcase, as the team won the opening game off a Jessi Couch extra inning homerun against Boston College before dropping the second game to Radford.

Couch's homer was just the second of the season for the Blue Raiders, but the three timely runs gave the team the lead after a three run Boston College rally in the previous frame to force extra innings as the Raiders won 6-4.

Lindsey Vander threw a complete game 8.0 innings of work en route to her fourth win of the season striking out six allowing three earned runs on eight hits.

Vander Lugt morning was highlighted by a fifth inning jam she brilliantly battled through giving up no runs. The Olympia, Wash., native gave up a single to the first batter and retired the second before nearly tossing up a foul ball that nearly hooked fair for the BC homerun. Vander Lugt rebounded and befuddled the batter on the next pitch for the looking strikeout. She would walk the next hitter before retire two consecutive with great defensive help behind her.

Kelsey Dortch opened the scoring for the Blue Raiders in the top of the fourth inning using her speed to advance from first to home as the Boston College centerfielder misplayed a Corrie Abel line-drive single putting the Raiders up 1-0 and Abel at second. Abel would move to third on a wild pitch, but the team could not drive her home.

In the top of the fifth, Brittney Banania doubled off Eagles relief pitcher Allison Gage to score Kristi Marquez from third who earlier doubled to center and was then pushed to third on a Kandra Singleton sac bunt. This gave the Blue Raiders a 2-0 lead. Banania continues to lead the Raiders with seven RBIs.

Middle Tennessee would tack on one more run before allowing a three run Eagles rally in the bottom of the seventh to send the game to extra innings. The Blue Raiders would win 6-4 in extra innings.

The team could not carry the winning momentum into the second game of the day, as the squad would drop a contest to Radford 5-2.

Caty Jutson was saddled with the loss dropping to 0-3, on the season. Jutson threw 3.0 innings of work allowing three runs, two earned, off of seven hits. Freshman Janele Robinson came in for 4.0 innings of relief giving up one run while tallying one strikeout.

Caitlin McLure scored the first Blue Raider run, crossing the plate in the bottom of the first, from second on a Kelsey Dortch single.

Radford touched-up Jutson for a three-run homer opening a lead, 4-1. Middle Tennessee was not able to surmount a comeback.

Middle Tennessee had chances in the bottom fourth with Jessi Couch reaching on error and Kaycee Popham driving a single to right the side the infield. Both runners would advance on a wild pitch to Kristi Marquez. Marquez would battle Highlanders pitcher Heather Paquette for 12 pitches before striking out looking ending the frame.

Again in the sixth, Middle Tennessee would rally with one outs as Corrie Abel and Natalie Ysais lead off with singles bringing Couch to the plate with no outs. Couch's sac fly would bring home Abel from third and give the Lebanon, Tenn., native four RBIs for the day. No other runs would score.

In the seventh, Kandra Singleton legged out an infield and stole second, but she could not be brought home ending the game.

"Overall our hitting greatly improved as our strikeouts were cut in half from what we had been doing," said head coach Sue Nevar. "The homerun in the first game was exciting. In the second game we could not quite make the necessary adjustments to get the job done."

The Blue Raiders conclude their play at the 2010 USF Under Armour Invitational as they take Ball State and Central Michigan which were both changed from original tournament schedule to adjust to Friday's rain. Livestats and full coverage will be available on GoBlueRaiders.com.

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