Blue Raiders fall 5-1 to rival Hilltoppers

Skinner ends night 3 for 4

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - After a two-hour rain delay the Blue Raiders and Western Kentucky were able to take the field for the first game of the three-game series in which the Hilltoppers pulled out a 5-1 win. Neither team scored until the fourth when the Hilltoppers pulled ahead 3-0 and never looked back. The Blue Raiders loaded the bases in the fifth but Western Kentucky got out of the inning unscathed after a swinging strikeout and fielder's choice. Hilltopper starter Matt Ridings left the game due to an injury with one out in the inning and Taylor Haydel entered the game in relief and got the outs for Western Kentucky. "Matt Ridings was big-time. For the sake of him and his future I hope he is not hurt bad whatever his injury was. He was coasting and the only chance we were going to get was to get him out of the game or make him tired. Hydal came into a tough situation, very tough and retired the two hitters. He did exactly what he had to do and with a lot of confidence. He pretty much commanded the rest of the game," head coach Steve Peterson said. "Going back to Ridings, he took away our confidence and we just didn't have a lot of fight. Middle Tennessee did not pose a serious threat again until the ninth in which it had runners at first and third with no outs trailing 5-0. Senior Will Skinner singled to left field bringing in sophomore Justin Guidry from third and breaking-up the shutout but the team was unable to bring in the other two runners as the game ended on a swinging strikeout. "It was very disappointing to see very few balls hit hard. Skinner had a nice day other than that we just really did not have a strong mental approach going after whoever was pitching. That is very disappointing because there is a lot riding on this game and the series. There still is but I just did not have the confidence level of the hitters like I thought I would," Peterson said. Senior Kenneth Roberts took the loss on the mound after

allowing three runs on 11 hits in 6.1 innings of work. The Hilltoppers left a total of 12 runners on base in the game as Roberts got strikeouts and good defense in key situations. The Blue Raider pitching staff saw appearances from junior Nick Montgomery, Guidry and freshman Daniel Palo as they combined for 1.2 innings of work allowing two runs on three hits. The Blue Raiders ended the game with seven hits but five of those came after the sixth inning. Skinner led the way with three hits as he went 3 for 4 and drove in the only Middle Tennessee run. Senior Blake McDade and Guidry each doubled for their only hits which were also the only extra base hits in the game. Junior Justin Miller and freshman Ryan Ford were the only other Blue Raiders to record hits in the game. Western Kentucky put runs on the board first after a bases loaded single by Crabtree. Then Payton hit into a fielder's choice adding another run. The Hilltoppers ended the fourth scoring three runs on five hits to take a 3-0 lead. The Hilltoppers added another run in the eighth after a single by Andreoli scored Crabtree from second, 4-0. A hard hit ball to McDade by Rice got past him for a single and allowed Robbins to score from second and extend the Western Kentucky lead. The two teams will play the second game of the series at 6 p.m. on Friday, May 21. There is inclement weather forecast for the Bowling Green, Ky., area on Friday. In the event changes are made to game time they will be posted on goblueraiders.com if and when they are decided.

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