Baseball Drops Finale in Last Inning, 7-6

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CARBONDALE, Ill. - Erik Alvarez's single in the bottom of the ninth plated an unearned run, allowing Southern Illinois to defeat Middle Tennessee, 7-6, and win the series Sunday afternoon at Abe Martin Field.

Kevin Koski drew a leadoff walk in the ninth against Middle Tennessee's Langdon Stanley. After a popout and a flyout, Koski stole second and the throw got away, allowing him to advance to third. Alvarez then laced a single down the leftfield line, scoring the winning run and giving the homestanding Salukis (13-5) a second straight victory in their last at-bat.

Dusty Baker (4-0), the fourth SIU hurler, tossed one scoreless inning, allowing one hit and picking up the win for the second consecutive day. Stanley (0-3) suffered the loss for the second straight game, giving up an unearned run on one hit with a walk and a strikeout.

Middle Tennessee (5-7) outhit SIU, 14-10, but stranded nine runners in the contest, including at least one runner in every inning but the second and the sixth. Doug Birkofer and Wayne Kendrick each had three hits, with Jeff Beachum and Alex Watson adding two hits and Adam Warren driving in three runs.

Blue Raider starter Jeff Kasser worked out of several jams, making it through five innings. The righthander allowed two runs on four hits, walking four and striking out one. He walked two in the second inning but picked both runners off at first, then worked around a wild pitch on a strikeout and a hit batter in the fourth. He also induced a 3-6-3 inning-ending doubleplay in the fifth after giving up a leadoff walk and then throwing away a pickoff attempt.

Middle Tennessee's Allan Woodward worked a scoreless inning but Chad Coley gave up four runs in the seventh inning, allowing the Salukis to tie the game at six. Stanley got the final out of the seventh, worked the eighth and walked Koski to start the ninth before giving way to Shay Horseman, who got two outs before allowing Alvarez's single to end the contest.

SIU starter Adam Snyder worked five innings, giving up six runs on 10 hits while walking two. Ryan Welch worked 2.1 scoreless innings, allowing the home team to get back in the game before giving way to Charlie Weber, who got two outs before allowing a leadoff walk in the ninth to Beachum. Baker came on and allowed a single to Nathan Hines, but Beachum was thrown out at the plate.

The Blue Raiders started the game with three straight singles from Birkofer, Kendrick and Beachum, scoring a run and putting runners on the corners with no one out. Michael McKenry lined out to left with Kendrick tagging at third on the play and scoring, but Kendrick was called out for leaving early. Chase Eakes then lined out, ending the inning with Middle Tennessee scoring just once.

The lead was short-lived, as the Salukis pushed across two runs in the bottom of the inning to take their first lead of the weekend.

Scott Elmendorf drew a one-out walk and scored on Grant Gerrard's double to leftcenter. After a groundout, Dean Cademartori's single through the middle plated Gerrard for a 2-1 SIU advantage.

The Blue Raiders tied the game in the fourth after a one-out walk to Warren and a double to rightcenter from Josh Horn. Watson's groundout plated Warren, tying the score at two.

Middle Tennessee regained the lead in the fifth with four runs on four hits, beginning with a leadoff single from Birkofer. The sophomore was thrown out trying to steal second, but Kendrick followed with a single to rightcenter and then Beachum singled. McKenry walked to load the bases and Eakes lined out to left, allowing Kendrick to score. Warren then belted the first pitch over the leftfield wall for his second career home run, a three-run shot, giving the Blue Raiders a 6-2 edge.

In the seventh the Salukis tied the game with four runs on four hits against Coley. Hunter Harrigan hit a screamer off Horn's glove at third base with one out and Koski was hit with two outs. Elmendorf then singled to leftcenter, scoring Harrigan, and Gerrard followed with a double off the base of the wall in centerfield, plating two runs. Alvarez then singled to rightfield, scoring Gerrard to tie the contest at eight. Stanley came on to get the final out, although Catemartori lined out sharply to center.

The Blue Raiders tried to answer in the eighth with a one-out single to right from Watson and a walk to Rawley Bishop. But Birkofer struck out against Weber and Kendrick grounded into a fielder's choice, ending the threat.

In the ninth Beachum drew a leadoff walk and moved to second on McKenry's sacrifice. Hines, who entered the game in the seventh, laced a ball up the middle that hit the side of the mound and then bounced off Bret Maugeri's leg at second base. Beachum was waved home on the play, but Maugeri gathered it and threw out Beachum at the plate, again keeping the score knotted at six.

Middle Tennessee ends a seven-game road swing at Austin Peay on Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. and hosts UT Martin Thursday at Reese Smith Field at 3 p.m.

GAME NOTES

Doug Birkofer extended his hitting streak to four games with a single in the first ... Wayne Kendrick extended his hitting streak to three games with a single in the first ... Jeff Beachum extended his hitting streak to seven games with a single in the first ... There was a 35-minute rain delay in the top of the second inning ... Josh Horn extended his hitting streak to five games with a double in the

fourth ... Michael McKenry extended his hitting streak to seven games with a single in the seventh ... Birkofer recorded a career-high three hits and collected seven in the three-game series ... Kendrick tied his career-high for the second day in a row with three hits.

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