Baseball Drops 9-6 Decision

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - Scott Billak and Allen Aubin both drove in three runs and Bailey Pratt worked seven strong innings in just his second start of the year, leading Birmingham Southern to a 9-4 victory over Middle Tennessee Saturday afternoon at Striplin Field. The Panthers (9-8) scored once in the third and fourth innings, pushed across four runs in the fifth and three more in the sixth to take the series and send Middle Tennessee to its 10th loss in the last 13 games. Billak had three RBIs with just one base hit, drawing a walk with the bases loaded and also being hit with the bags fill. Aubin had a two-run single and a sacrifice fly. Mark Goforth and James Oliver both had a pair of hits for the Panthers, while Goforth and Matt Barber both scored twice. Pratt (1-1) tossed a career-high 7.0 innings to get the victory, giving up four runs on six hits with two walks and three strikeouts. He also hit three batters. Pratt retired eight batters in a row at one point and 16 of the first 20 hitters in the game. Middle Tennessee's Todd Martin recorded four of the team's nine hits and three RBIs, including a two-run homer in the ninth, his seventh round-tripper of the year. Marcus Taylor added three RBIs with his fourth home run of the season. Middle Tennessee (6-10) starter Brett Reilley (0-1) suffered the loss in his first start of the season, allowing five runs on five hits in four-plus innings. The righthander walked one and struck out six. He worked ahead of nine of the first 13 batters of the game, but fell behind seven of the final eight hitters he faced. Jimmy Kelly relieved Reilley in the fifth, facing three batters and allowing two hits. Nick Marrs worked two-plus innings, allowing three runs on three hits, and Brett Smalley got the final five outs for the Blue Raiders. Middle Tennessee took an early lead with a run in the third inning. Chase Eakes walked to leadoff and moved to second on a one-out bunt from Wayne Kendrick. Martin's chopper through the middle plated Eakes for a 1-0 Blue Raiders lead. Birmingham Southern tied the game in the bottom of the frame, plating another unearned run after six on Friday night. Oliver singled to leadoff and after a fielder's choice and a strikeout, Goforth's grounder up the middle rolled up the arm of second baseman Kendrick and into leftfield. Barber then chopped a ball down the third base line and Josh Horn's throw pulled Martin off the bag at first base, loading the bags for BSC. Billak was then hit with an 0-2 pitch, forcing in a run and knotting the score at one. The Panthers took the lead in the fourth when Oliver doubled to

rightcenter with two outs and Tripp Salem followed with a single to left, scoring the run for a 2-1 BSC advantage. Goforth led off the fifth with a walk and Barber followed with a single to center, putting runners on the corners. Billak then singled through the leftside, scoring Goforth and ending Reilley's day. A groundout moved both runners up and Aubin's single to rightcenter plated a pair of runs for a 5-1 Birmingham Southern edge, closing the book on Reilley. Brett Ashley followed Aubin's single with a double against Kelly and Oliver's sacrifice fly scored another run for a 6-1 BSC lead through five innings. Middle Tennessee got back into the game in the sixth when Martin singled with one out and Michael McKenry followed with a single to leftfield. Taylor then belted his fourth home run of the season, a three-run shot to leftcenter, cutting the deficit to 6-4. But the Panthers struck for three runs in the bottom of the inning on three hits and another Middle Tennessee error. Ronny Woods led off with a single and Goforth followed with a perfect bunt single. Barber's sacrifice attempt was booted by Horn at third base, loading the bases with no one out. Billak walked to force in a run and Blake Burton singled, scoring another run. Aubin's sacrifice fly to right gave the home team a 9-4 advantage. Jeff Beachum singled with one out in the ninth for the Blue Raiders and Martin blasted an 0-2 pitch over the wall in rightcenter, the final runs of the contest. The two teams conclude the series Sunday at 1 p.m. Middle Tennessee takes on Tennessee Tech Wednesday at 7 p.m. before opening Sun Belt Conference play next weekend at home against Arkansas-Little Rock. **GAME NOTES**

Brett Reilley made his first career start for the Blue Raiders. The righthander was scheduled to start on Sunday but everyone moved up one spot in the rotation with the injury to Matt Scott ... Todd Martin extended his hitting streak to six games with a single in the first ... Reilley struck out a career-high six in four-plus innings in the contest ... Adam Warren extended his hitting streak to five games with a single in the eighth ... Wayne Kendrick's six-game hitting streak came to an end with an 0-for-2 performance.

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