McKenry's Four Hits Not Enough in 8-5 Loss

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NEW ORLEANS, La. - Michael McKenry had four hits, including a game-tying home run, but New Orleans plated three runs in the bottom of the seventh to break a tie game and defeat Middle Tennessee, 8-5, Saturday afternoon at Maestri Field. McKenry went 4-for-5 with two runs scored and two RBIs, including a game-tying two-run homer in the top of the seventh, completing a three-run comeback by the Blue Raiders to knot the contest at five. But the Privateers answered with three runs in the bottom of the seventh on five hits against three Middle Tennessee relievers, highlighted by an RBI double from Michael Epping, an RBI single from Mike Constantino and a sacrifice fly by Mike Anderson. Middle Tennessee missed numerous opportunities to get back in the game or take the lead, stranding 11 runners in the contest, nine in the final five innings. Matt McKissick (1-0), the second of three UNO hurlers, got the win despite allowing McKenry's home run. The lefthander walked two and allowed just the one hit in 1.2 innings. Justin Garcia worked the final two innings for the Privateers for his second save, striking out two and giving up two hits. Garcia also worked out of a ninth-inning jam after a walk and a double, getting Nathan Hines to ground back to the pitcher for the final out of the contest. UNO starter Bryan Cryer tossed 5.1 innings, giving up three runs, two earned, on nine hits with six strikeouts. The Blue Raiders used five pitchers in the contest, surrendering 15 hits. Starter Tyler Copeland allowed three runs on three hits in three-plus innings, walking three, while Peter Mantzanis gave up two runs on five hits in two innings. Tommy Sterritt (0-1) took the loss, allowing a hit and one run in 1.1 innings. Shay Horseman gave up two runs on three hits and did not get anyone out, while Chad Edwards tossed 1.2 innings, allowing two hits with two walks with a strikeout. Epping and Constantino were the two major cogs in UNO's victory, reaching base in nine of 10 plate appearances, collecting four hits, scoring five times and

driving in three other runs. The duo walked four times and Epping was hit in the second inning. The Privateers struck first in the contest with a run in the second inning after a leadoff single from Alex Webster. Epping was hit by a Copeland curveball and Constantino sacrificed, but Epping was forced out at second. Josh Tarnow's single through the middle plated Webster. In the third David Broussard put down a perfect bunt to leadoff and moved to second when the throw got past Todd Martin at first base. A wild pitch moved the runner to third and after a walk to Brandon Bowser, Johnny Giovatella grounded into a doubleplay, scoring Broussard for a 2-0 UNO advantage. The Blue Raiders got a run back and missed a chance to tie in the game in the fourth. Wayne Kendrick led off with a single and McKenry followed with a double. Martin's groundout plated a run but Cryer picked off McKenry at third for the second out and the home team leading, 2-1. UNO plated a run in the bottom of the inning but it could have been more. Epping drew a leadoff walk, moved to second on a wild pitch and stole third as Constantino walked, ending Copeland's day. The next two batters popped out against Mantzanis but Anderson's two-out single put the Privateers ahead, 3-1. The Blue Raiders cut the deficit to one again in the fifth when Josh Horn doubled, moved to third on an error and scored on Jeff Beachum's single to right. But again the home team answered, scoring twice in the bottom of the frame on three hits. Epping doubled with two outs and scored on Constantino's bloop single. Greg Wolfe then doubled to righcenter, plating the run for a 5-2 UNO lead. Middle Tennessee cut into the lead in the sixth when three straight singles to leadoff the inning from McKenry, Martin and Adam Warren to load the bases. A line drive from Nathan Hines plated McKenry and ended Cryer's day on the mound. McKissick got an out but walked Chase Eakes to load the bases before Beachum ended the inning with a flyout. The Blue Raiders tied the game in the seventh with Kendrick drew a leadoff walk and McKenry blasted his sixth home run of the year, a two-run shot deep over the leftfield wall. But the Middle Tennessee bullpen faltered again, with Webster singling with one out against Sterritt in the bottom of the seventh to start the rally. Epping then laced a double down the rightfield line against Horseman, scoring Webster, and Constantino's single to left scored Epping. Wolfe's single against Horseman and T.J. Baxter's single off Edwards loaded the bases before a sacrifice fly from Anderson gave UNO an 8-5 lead. Horn reached on an error and Chase Eakes singled to centerfield to put runners on the corners in the eighth, but Beachum and pinch-hitter Marcus Taylor both struck out against Garcia to end the threat. In the ninth Martin walked and Warren ripped a double down the rightfield line before Hines bounced back to Garcia to end the contest. The rubber game of the series Sunday starts at 1 p.m., with Middle Tennessee sending righthander Brett Reilley to the mound to face UNO's Brandon Johnson. **GAME NOTES**

Todd Martin was in the lineup at first base after three straight starts in centerfield. Doug Birkofer made his first start since March 25 and only his second of the season in rightfield. Nathan Hines was the designated hitter, his first start since March 22 at Tennessee Tech ... Michael McKenry extended his hitting streak to six games with a single in the second. McKenry tied his career-high with four hits and is 7-for-10 with four runs scored, two doubles, two home runs and five RBIs in the series ... Wayne Kendrick extended his hitting streak to seven games with a single in the fourth ... Tommy Sterritt picked up the loss in the game, the first decision of his career, totaling nine appearances.

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