Softball falls in FSU tournament opener

Freshman pitchers show well in relief

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - The Middle Tennessee softball team dropped its opening doubleheader of the 2011 Garnet and Gold Games on Friday in Tallahassee, Fla. The team fell 13-0 to #24 Kentucky its the first game, before dropping the second 10-3 to host Florida State.

Caty Jutson started the opening contest in the circle for MT. Jutson was stable through the first two innings, masterfully battling through a bases-loaded jam in the first inning. MT toughened up and surrendered just one run in the frame.

In the second, Kandra Singleton made a tough grab on a hard shot up the middle, then flipping it to Brittney Banania covering second to get the force out and end the inning without giving up a run.

The Kentucky pressure would be too much in the third, as MT gave up six scores in the side. Four runs would come off a grand-slam home run to Kentucky's Megan Locke. UK led 7-0 after three.

Freshman Jordyn Fisherback came in relief of Jutson in the second and shut down the Wildcats in the next three innings. She tallied a career-high five strikeouts on the day and showed great improvement from her first performance of the year against Murray State. Kentucky would find their sticks again in the seventh, touching up Fisherback for six more runs, five earned.

At the plate, Kristi Marquez and Banania were the only MT batters to record hits off the stingy arm or UK's Lauren Cumbess.

"We did not adjust to the off-speed pitching," head coach Sue Nevar. "We went out thinking speed, speed, speed. When it was not there we did not make the necessary changes."

In the second game, Middle Tennessee got out quickly on host FSU, putting the their first batter on-base. The team was unable to bring the lead-off hitter around. After a holding the Seminoles scoreless in the first, starting-pitcher Janele Robinson was roughed up by Florida State in the second giving up six runs off seven hits, including a grand-slam.

Freshman Shelby Stinnett got her first relief appearance of the year, throwing 4.2 innings, while allowing only four earned runs and striking out three.

In the third, Nina Davenport placed a slap over the head of the FSU left-fielder and used to her speed to motor around for a triple. Abel drove in the sophomore on the following play to pull back a run, making the score 6-1.

MT's bats finally came alive in the sixth inning. The team recorded four hits for two runs. Natalie Ysais doubled to score Banania for an RBI. Two batters later, Dortch drove in Dever for her first RBI on the year. Dever pinch-ran for the KaylaToney who reached on her first hit of her Blue Raider career.

Florida State answered in the bottom half of the frame, tacking on three runs to end the game 10-3.

"We've just got to keep swinging," Abel said. "Our hits will come. We have to score some runs to help out our pitching."

The teams return to action Saturday at 10 a.m. as they take on Georgia Southern. Results and coverage will be available at GoBlueRaiders.com and Twitter.com/MT_Softball.

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