Blue Raiders fall 11-8 to Portland in series finale

Ford goes 3-4 in loss

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

The Middle Tennessee baseball team came out of the gates firing on Sunday afternoon, but couldn't answer a late comeback by Portland, falling to the Pilots 11-8 at Reese Smith Jr. Field. "I know that it's just three games, but we need to get better at our hitting," head coach Steve Peterson said. "When you get opportunities to hit a ball, you have got to hit it. You can't miss it or foul it off. We also need to be more consistent with our pitching. You have to throw quality pitches when you're on the mound for us. I will say though, the one thing that has kept us in these games is the play of our defense." After stranding 13 men on base in Saturday's meeting, Justin Guidry tried to make up for it quickly. Coming to the plate with two on and two outs in the bottom of the first, the junior sent a 3-2 pitch



over the wall in right field for a three run homer, his first of the year. Guidry would finish the day going 2-4 with three RBI and a walk. Jay Morris, a senior transfer from former Sun Belt member New Orleans, also showed off some power with a two-run blast in the fourth. The Lacombe, La., native was 1-3 with two RBI. Ryan Ford set a new career high, picking up three hits in four at bats to go along with a run batted in and a run scored. Overall, Middle Tennessee (0-3) was out-hit 13-10. On the mound, Daniel Palo made his 2011 debut, pitching 4.2 innings, allowing four earned runs and striking out three. Hunter Dawson gave up two runs in 1.1 innings and struck out three as well. Paul Mittura was pegged with his first loss of the year, after giving up a pair of runs and striking out three in the an inning of work. Cody Tollison made his first collegiate appearance and allowed two runs.

Keaton Baker pitched a hitless final six outs for the Blue Raiders. In addition to the three-run homer in the first, Middle Tennessee added another run to their lead in the second after a pair of singles from Ford and Johnny Thomas. Back-to-back deep fly balls allowed Ford to score, handing a MT a 4-0 lead through two frames. Following Morris' home run in the bottom of the fourth, Portland began to mount their comeback with a four-run rally in the top of the fifth to chase Palo from the game. The Pilots opened up the seventh with back-to-back triples to cut the deficit to one at 6-5, and a single down the right field line plated the tying run. After recording a pair of outs, Beau Fraser homered to left field to hand Portland a 9-6 lead. UP would post two more runs to their tally an inning later to go up 11-6. Middle Tennessee picked up their final two runs in the bottom of the eighth after Will Skinner led off with a double. Following a wild pitch and a Jordan Rorex walk, a Tyler Acker sacrifice fly brought Skinner home. Rorex would later score on a Ford single through the left side. The Blue Raiders will now prepare for a trip to Cookeville, on Wednesday to square off against in-state foe Tennessee Tech. First pitch is set for 3 PM.

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