Eighth inning rally keys 9-4 Blue Raider victory at Kentucky

First road win against an SEC opponent since 2009

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LEXINGTON, Ky. - The Middle Tennessee baseball team utilized a late six-run rally to pull ahead of Kentucky on Wednesday evening en route to a 9-4 victory over the Wildcats at Cliff Hagan Stadium in Lexington, Ky. "We played better defensively today than we did yesterday and came up with some clutch hits," head coach Steve Peterson said. "I've said to the players multiple times, that baseball will find you, and you just have to keep battling. To see the players respond in the eighth like they did is definitely a positive." The victory is the first against a Southeastern Conference opponent on the road since knocking off Mississippi State in Starkville in 2009. Hunter Adkins put up a stellar outing on the mound, pitching 6.2 innings and allowing just two earned runs and three overall. The sophomore left the mound in line for a victory, but ended up with a no decision. After Hunter Dawson allowed the tying run to cross, Paul Mittura came in and pitched the next 1.2 innings, giving up one run and picking up his first career victory. Jud Stoltz entered in the ninth and induced a game-ending double play to earn his first career save. It was the fourth double play that the Blue Raider defense turned on the day. At the plate, the Blue Raiders were led by Hank LaRue, who went 2-for-4 with three runs batted in and a walk. Will Skinner ended 2-for-4 as well with a run scored, and Ryan Stephens was the only other Blue Raider with multiple hits, ending 2-for-5. Overall, Middle Tennessee (3-10) outhit Kentucky 12-9, and every Blue Raider who registered an at bat recorded a hit. Kentucky (6-7) posted the first run of the day in the second. Braden Kapteyn reached on an error, and made it to third on a single by Michael Williams before scoring on an Adkins wild pitch. UK loaded the bases later in the inning, but Adkins was able to induce an inning-ending double play to end the threat. Middle Tennessee got on the board with a pair of runs in the fourth to grab their first lead of the ball game. Justin Guidry led off with a walk, and a Robert Lawrence double down the left field line evened things up. Following a Stephens single, Johnny Thomas hit into a double play, but it scored Lawrence to put the Blue Raiders up 2-1. Guidry went 1-for-3 with two runs scored and a walk, and Lawrence ended 1-for-4 with a run scored and a run batted in. Middle Tennessee tacked on another run in the fifth. Jordan Rorex singled through the left side to start off the inning and stole second. LaRue reached on a single to center to advance Rorex to third, and Tyler Acker hit into a double play to score the run. Rorex finished the day 1-for-4 with two runs scored and a walk. The Wildcats tied it up in the bottom of the seventh. After Paul McConkey and Matt Reida singles put two

on with two outs, Dawson took over for Adkins on the mound. Taylor Black and Chad Wright laced back-to-back singles to score two and chase Dawson. Mittura recorded the final out of the inning to send it into the eighth tied at 3-3. Middle Tennessee regained the lead with an impressive rally in the eighth, sending 10 to the plate and scoring six. Acker, Skinner and Guidry loaded the bases to lead off the inning, but back-to-back strikeouts had Kentucky on the verge of leaving the frame untarnished. However, Thomas put a single through the left side to score Acker and begin the Blue Raider barrage. Ryan Ford kept it going by lacing a single just over the reach of UK second baseman Reida, plating both Skinner and Guidry. Rorex earned a walk to load the bases again, and LaRue knocked a bases-clearing double off the wall in right center. Ford finished 1-for-4 with a run scored and two runs batted in, and Thomas was 1-for-4 with a run scored and an RBI. Acker went 1-for-4 with a run scored and a walk. Kentucky picked up another run in the bottom of the ninth, but Stoltz took to the mound and worked out of a bases-loaded jam to pick up the save. Middle Tennessee will have the weekend off before hosting Southern Illinois next Tuesday and Wednesday at Reese Smith Jr. Field. First pitch on Tuesday is set for 3 p.m.

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