Baseball falls 5-2 to rival Western Kentucky

Saturday's game set for 3 p.m. and will air on CSS

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - Middle Tennessee fell behind early and while it battled and tied the game could not pull ahead as Western Kentucky took a 5-2 win on Friday night at Nick Denes Field. Middle Tennessee (5-11, 0-1) had five hits in the game with no player recording more than one. Senior Tyler Acker and freshman Ryan Stephens drove in the Blue Raiders' only two runs. Western Kentucky (11-6, 1-0) performed well offensively with 11 hits, 10 of which came against Middle Tennessee starter sophomore Daniel Palo. Palo allowed all five runs and issued five walks in his six innings of work. The Germantown, Tenn., native also recorded four strikeouts. "Daniel battled hard and kept us as close as he could in the game we just couldn't matchup with what Perkins was doing against us. Daniel had good stuff, pretty much every time he goes out there he has a good fastball, it's just always the same thing. He hurts himself with walking people, hitting batters or getting behind in the count where they can sit on the fastball. If he can ever figure that out he has the chance to be an outstanding pitcher but its one thing to have good stuff and it's another to command that good stuff. That's what he's got to do," head coach Steve Peterson said. R-sophomore Joey McClung entered the game in relief working two innings allowing two hits and striking out three. The Hilltoppers' Tanner Perkins took the win on the mound with his impressive eight inning outing. Perkins struck out 10 Blue Raider hitters and allowed just one earned run as he improved to 4-1 on the season. "Once Perkins got going he really started carving us up. He worked both sides of the plate, had a good sinking fastball, worked inside enough to keep us honest and had the changeup going against the right-handers. We had some guys get overmatched as he got better and if you look at his numbers going in you knew he was off to a good start and had been throwing well," Peterson said. Palo struggled to begin the game letting the Hilltoppers load the bases with no outs. Then Carter hit a ball to right field letting Andreoli score from third for the first run of the game. Robbins, the next batter, had a sac fly allowing a second run to score from third. Middle Tennessee answered quickly in the bottom of the first. Thomas stole second to put himself in scoring position beating out a throw from third base for a single. Stephens singled up the middle to bring in Thomas and put the Blue Raiders within one run, 2-1. Acker singled to left field in the top of the third with

runners at first and second allowing Guidry to score and knot the score at 2. Western Kentucky added another run and took the lead back in the bottom of the inning when Carter singled up the middle to score Hartle from second, 3-2. A diving catch by Skinner with the bases loaded saved runs from scoring and then Palo struck out Huck to end the inning and keep the Hilltoppers from opening up a big lead. Western Kentucky's Huck doubled to left field with two outs and runners at first and second to add another run to the board making its lead two, 4-2, in the fifth. Palo then allowed a base on balls to Andreoli with a full count and the bases loaded allowing another run for the Hilltoppers. Middle Tennessee will play the second game of the weekend series Saturday, March 19 at 3 p.m. Chip Walters will have the call on the Blue Raider Network and fans can watch the action on CSS as the Sun Belt Game of the Week.

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