Blue Raiders Split in Crucial Series with FIU

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MIAMI, Fla. - Middle Tennessee softball (19-36-1, 6-5 SBC) split with Florida International (24-25, 7-4 SBC), losing the first game 7-4 and winning game two 5-3, Saturday at University Park. The split keeps the Blue Raiders in third place in the Sun Belt race.

Shelby Stiner opened the first inning of the second game with a single and scored off and RBI single by Melissa Weiland. Florida International came back in its half of the inning and tied the game when Embry hit an RBI single.

The Blue Raiders took the lead in the second inning. With one out, Samantha Floyd drew a walk and stole second. Floyd advanced to third on a ground out and after Stiner drew a walk and stole her 16th base of the season, Floyd scored from an FIU error.

Middle Tennessee pushed across three runs in the fourth inning. Floyd again led off with a walk and back-to-back singles by Stiner and Martha Davis loaded the bases. Weiland picked up her third hit of the game, and also notched two RBI, to score Floyd and Stiner. Katie Mielke's RBI single plated Weiland for the Blue Raiders third run of the inning.

Floyd, who started the game for the Blue Raiders on the mound, gave up a solo homerun to Tabitha Embry for the Golden Panther's second run in the fourth. Florida International had bases loaded with two outs, with Middle Tennessee's Trish White on the mound in relief in the fifth inning, when Embry got her third hit of the game to score one run. Golden Panther pinch hitter Cassie Parker attempted to also go home on the play but she was gunned down by center fielder Davis when she threw a strike to catcher Brandi Boehner for the third out of the inning.

Floyd picked up her second win as a Blue Raider and improves to 2-3 on the season. She went four innings allowing three runs on six hits and struck out one. White got the save in the game, her fourth of the season, as she tossed three scoreless innings and allowed just two hits.

Weiland led the Blue Raiders going 3-for-3 with three RBI and one walk. Stiner, who was held hitless in game one, came back in game two going 2-for-3 with two runs scored, a walk and a stolen base.

Middle Tennessee dropped game one 7-4, and it all began with a three-run first for Florida International.

The Blue Raiders did manage to put one run on the board to start the game. With one out, Davis reached first off a Golden Panther miscue. Davis scored when Muriel Ledbetter hit an RBI double.

Middle Tennessee hurler Laura Moore gave up a lead-off single to FIU's Deomni Murray, after having her on the ropes with one ball and two strikes. A sacrifice bunt placed Murray on second and a single by Jennifer Powell and a fielder's choice play by the Blue Raiders loaded the bases for Florida International. Kim Rodriquez's RBI single scored Murray and a two RBI single by Ashley Falk gave FIU the 3-1 lead.

Florida International padded its lead in the bottom of the fourth inning. Desiree Fink and Murray led off with singles and both scored when Powell hit a two RBI double.

Middle Tennessee had runners at second four times and stranded seven. Moore started the game and went four innings allowing five runs on nine hits and falls to 9-14 on the season. Moore was replaced by sophomore Ashley Katinas in the bottom of the fifth inning. Katinas tossed a scoreless fifth inning before walking three batters, including walking in a run, to allow FIU to score two more runs in the sixth inning.

The Blue Raiders plated three runs in the top of the seventh inning but it was too little too late. Pinch hitter Boehner and right fielder Michelle Wilkes led off the inning with back-to-back singles and Boehner scored off an RBI single by Davis. Ledbetter recorded her second double of the game to score Wilkes and Davis. Mielke lined to the third baseman to end the game and the Middle Tennessee threat.

Middle Tennessee closes out its series with Florida International on Sunday. The single game of the series is scheduled for 12 p.m. at University Park.

NOTES: Ledbetter tied her own school record as she now has 29 walks this season ... Ledbetter's 17 doubles ranks her fourth in the Blue Raider record books ... Stiner's 55 hits this season ties her for eighth for most hits in single season ... Stiner also has 16 stolen bases, the most for a Blue Raider since former Middle Tennessee player Kip Phillips had 16 in 2003 ... The Blue Raider's 5-3 win over Florida International halts a six-game losing streak to the Golden Panthers ... Ledbetter's 52 hits this season is good for 10th place ... Weiland has been on fire in Sun Belt Conference games, with a .439 batting average with 18 hits and 10 RBI ... The Blue Raiders remain in third place in the Sun Belt race ... A win over FIU on Sunday would give Middle Tennessee a tie for second with the Golden Panthers.

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