Blue Raiders Hold on for 8-7 Triumph

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Todd Martin was 3-for-4 with two runs and three RBIs, including his Sun Belt-leading 15th home run of the season, and Allan Woodward worked a scoreless ninth to pick up the save, as Middle Tennessee held on for an 8-7 victory over Memphis Wednesday night at Reese Smith Field.

The Blue Raiders won their seventh straight at home over the Tigers and 12th consecutive nonconference game of the season. The squad has won eight of nine overall and improved to 17-4 at home this year.

The Blue Raiders (26-18) trailed 4-1 until a five-run fourth inning, highlighted by a three-run homer from Marcus Taylor that put Middle Tennessee ahead for good. Martin hit his two-run shot in the fifth in the fifth, putting the Blue Raiders ahead 8-4.

Memphis scored twice in the sixth, once in the eighth and had the tying run thrown out at the plate to end the eighth. Woodward came on in the ninth for his fourth save, retiring three straight batters.

Middle Tennessee starter Jeff Kasser (3-1) picked up the victory, working five innings. The righthander allowed four runs on six hits, walked two, struck out three, hit two batters and tossed two wild pitches.

Memphis starter Josh Langley (1-2) suffered the loss, giving up six runs on eight hits in 3.1 innings. Dusty Davis tossed 3.1 scoreless innings of relief for the Tigers (24-25), keeping the visitors in the game.

Adam Warren, Josh Horn and Michael McKenry all had a pair of hits for the Blue Raiders, with McKenry scoring twice.

K.K. Chalmers led off the game with a single, went to second on a wild pitch, moved to third on a bunt from Will Petersen and scored on a groundout by Bill Moss for a quick 1-0 Memphis lead.

The Blue Raiders tied the game with three singles in the bottom of the inning. Wayne Kendrick had a one-out single to center, McKenry singled to left with two outs and Martin laced a single to left, scoring Kendrick.

Memphis retook the lead the third on a strange series of events. Cory Barton was hit to leadoff and Chalmers walked. After a popout both runners stole, moving to second and third. Kasser struck out Moss and fell behind 3-0 to Adam Amar.

Catcher McKenry stood up to issue an intentional walk, but Kasser lobbed a strike over the middle of the plate. McKenry stood up again and Kasser did not understand, walking toward the plate before stepping off the rubber and balking, forcing home Barton for a 2-1 UM lead.

The Tigers scored twice more in the fourth, starting with a leadoff single from Josh Irvin, who scored on a double down the leftfield line by Michael Murray. Barton singled and Chalmers was hit to load the bases, and Kasser's second wild pitch of the contest plated Murray for a 4-1 advantage.

Middle Tennessee took the lead in the bottom of the inning, knocking Langley from the contest. McKenry was hit to leadoff and Martin followed with a single. Warren's double off the glove of third baseman Kyle Norrid plated McKenry before Taylor belted a hanging curveball over the rightfield wall for a 5-4 lead.

Rawley Bishop walked, Horn singled and Jeff Beachum blooped a single to center, loading the bases and ending Langley's day. Kendrick's ground ball was booted by Murray, but he got an out at second, allowing Bishop to score for a 6-4 advantage.

McKenry singled to leadoff the fifth and Martin followed with a two-run homer to leftcenter, his 15th of the season.

Memphis cut into the lead with two runs in the sixth. Barton had a leadoff homer to right with one out, his second of the season. Chalmers followed with a triple after a nasty carom off the right-centerfield wall and Petersen grounded out, scoring Chalmers and cutting the Middle Tennessee lead to 8-6.

Pinch-hitter Trey Wiedman led off the top of the eighth with a single and Barton's sharply-hit ball went between the legs of Kendrick at second, putting runners on the corners. Petersen hit the first pitch from Nick Marrs over the rightfield wall just foul, then singled to left, scoring pinch-runner Patrick Hope. Moss followed with a single to right, but Taylor gunned down Barton at the plate with the Blue Raiders clinging to a one-run lead.

In the ninth Woodward struck out Amar before Norris flied out to deep rightfield, with Taylor making the catch on the warning track. Robbie Goss grounded out to Horn to end the contest.

Middle Tennessee begins a three-game homestand this weekend against league-leader Louisiana-Lafayette. The Blue Raiders and Ragin' Cajuns play Friday at 7 p.m., Saturday at 4 p.m. and Sunday

at 1 p.m. Sunday is also the rain date for Optimist Little League Day, with a parade of players around the field before the game and foul balls sponsored by Agee's Sporting Goods.

GAME NOTES

Todd Martin extended his hitting streak to a career-high 12 games with an RBI single in the first ... Marcus Taylor extended his hitting streak to eight games with a three-run homer in the fourth ... Josh Horn extended his hitting streak to seven games with a single in the fourth ... Jeff Beachum extended his hitting streak to seven games with a single in the fourth ... Martin's homer in the fifth was his 15th of the season, tying Dwight Robinson (1990), Jamie Walker (1995) and Josh Archer (2003) for ninth on the single-season list ... Nathan Hines' career-long 14-game hitting streak ended with an 0-for-3 effort ... The Blue Raiders ended the game with 13 hits, their 11th straight game and 25th in the last 26 contests with double-digit hits.

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