Raiders Fall, 7-5, to Cajuns

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee stranded nine runners, including two in both the seventh and eighth innings, dropping a 7-5 decision to Louisiana-Lafayette Saturday at Reese Smith Field. The Ragin' Cajuns won the series with the victory and kept pace with Troy for first place in the Sun Belt. Middle Tennessee (26-20, 9-10 SBC) never led in the contest, falling behind as much as 5-1 before making a comeback. The Blue Raiders cut the deficit to 6-4 and 7-5 and had the tying and winning runs on base in both the seventh and eighth innings but could get the key hit. UL starter Buddy Glass (7-2) worked six-plus innings for the win, giving up four runs on 10 hits. The righthander struck out four and did not walk a batter. Gregory Harmon, in his first conference game of the season, worked the final two innings for his first save, striking out two. Middle Tennessee starter Tyler Copeland (6-3) suffered the loss, allowing six runs on 11 hits in 5.1 innings, walking three and striking out three. Five Ragin' Cajuns (34-16, 16-4) had two hits in the game, with Devery Van De Keere and Devon Bourque both driving in two runs. Marcus Taylor had a three-run homer and Matt Campbell a solo shot for the Blue Raiders. John McCarthy and Van De Keere both singled in the first and the Cajuns tried to steal a run with two outs. Copeland picked to first and Van De Keere got in a rundown, but Jeff Beachum's throw to the plate was in time to get McCarthy. In the second UL used three straight singles to score, with Josh Landry and Jefferies Tatford both reaching before a two-out single from Bourque scored Landry. The Blue Raiders tied the contest in the bottom of the inning with a two-out line drive over the leftfield wall from Campbell, his second home run of the season. Alex Preciado belted a solo homer, his second in two games, to leadoff the Cajuns fourth. Tatford and Scott Hawkins both singled later in the inning, putting runners on the corners, before Bourque's groundout scored Tatford for a 3-1 UL advantage. Matt Hicks walked and Van De Keere singled with one out in the UL fifth before Jonathan Lucroy stuck his bat out on an 0-2 pitch, punching it into rightcenter for an RBI single. Landry's single back through the box scored Van De Keere for a 5-1 lead. UL added another run in the sixth when Bourque, McCarthy and Hicks all walked and Van De Keere lifted a high fly ball to center, plating Bourque. The Blue Raiders got back in the game quickly in the bottom of the inning, with Todd Martin and Adam Warren both singling

before Taylor ripped the first offering from Glass to center just to the right of the centerfield wall, cutting the deficit to 6-4. Beachum singled to leadoff the seventh, ending the day for Glass. Michael McKenry walked against Beck with one out, putting the tying run on base, but Martin struck out looking and Warren fouled out to the catcher, ending the threat. The Cajuns scored an insurance run in the eighth when McCarthy singled with one out and Hicks followed with a perfectly executed hit-and-run, putting runners on the corners. Van De Keere followed with his second sacrifice fly of the game, scoring McCarthy for a 7-4 UL advantage. The Blue Raiders loaded the bases in the bottom of the eighth with no one out. Taylor walked, Alex Watson singled and Campbell walked, chasing Chad Beck from the contest. Horn flied out to left, scoring Taylor, but Beachum fouled out and Wayne Kendrick swung through a high fastball to end the inning with Middle Tennessee trailing by two. The two teams conclude the series Sunday at 1 p.m. Optimist Little League Day, canceled two weeks ago because of rain, will take place before the game with all foul balls souvenirs courtesy of Agee's Sporting Goods.

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