

Raiders Blow Lead, Fall 7-6 in Finale

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TROY, Ala. - Troy scored six times in the bottom of the eighth on just three hits, including a controversial call at the plate on the winning run, erasing a five-run deficit and defeating Middle Tennessee, 7-6, Saturday at Riddle-Pace Field. The Trojans swept the series and claimed the regular season Sun Belt championship. Middle Tennessee (27-24, 10-13 Sun Belt) dropped their fourth straight overall and sixth in the last seven outings. The Blue Raiders dropped to sixth in the Sun Belt and will face third-seeded South Alabama in the first round of the Sun Belt Championships Wednesday in

Bowling Green, Ky. The Blue Raiders scored four runs in the second inning and once in the third to take an early lead. Middle Tennessee led 5-1 before scoring once in the eighth on an error for a five-run advantage. But the visitors missed numerous opportunities to break the game wide open, stranding 12 runners in the contest, including seven in scoring position. Middle Tennessee starter Nick Marrs worked 5.1 innings, allowing one run on five hits in his second start of the season. He walked one, struck out two and hit a batter. Brett Reilley worked out of a jam in the sixth and departed in the eighth after the first two batters reached. Allan Woodward (2-2) suffered the loss, giving up four unearned runs in two-thirds of an inning in his first appearance in 10 days. Troy (41-14, 20-4) starter Tony Falls gave up five runs on seven hits in three innings, striking out six. Reliever Jonathan Sabat worked three scoreless innings, allowing just one hit with two walks and two strikeouts. Josh Dew tossed the final three innings for the Trojans, giving up an unearned run and striking out three. Wayne Kendrick and Michael McKenry both singled in the first for the Blue Raiders, but Falls struck out the side, including Alex Watson to end the inning. Middle Tennessee finally put together a string of hits in the second inning, the first time all weekend, scoring four times. Marcus Taylor singled to left with one out and Rawley Bishop was hit in the knee. Josh Horn's single to center plated Taylor and Jeff Beachum followed with a single to center, loading the bases. Kendrick popped out after working the count full, but Todd Martin picked him up, drilling a hanging breaking ball into the gap in rightcenter, clearing the bases and missing a home run by less than two feet. The Blue Raiders added another run in the third when Adam Warren led off with an infield single, stole second, moved to third on a groundout from Taylor and scored on a hard grounder to

third by Bishop for a 5-0 Middle Tennessee lead. The visitors had a chance to score again in the fourth, loading the bases when Beachum was hit, Kendrick beat out a perfect bunt for a hit and McKenry was intentionally walked. But Watson bounced into an inning-ending 4-6-3 doubleplay. The Trojans got on the board in the bottom of the inning when Tom King led off with a single, moved to second on a groundout by Jared Keel and scored on Dew's single down the leftfield line. King doubled with one out in the sixth and after a walk to Keel. Reilley relieved Marris and struck out Dew. The righthander then walked Clint Robinson to load the bases but induced a popout to Horn from Edgar Ramirez to end the threat with the Blue Raiders holding a 5-1 lead. The Raiders scored once in the eighth on a gift from Troy after a leadoff single from Beachum. He moved to second on a sacrifice by Kendrick and Martin walked. McKenry lined out but Watson's grounder to short went right between the legs of King and into leftcenter, allowing Beachum to score for a 6-1 Middle Tennessee advantage. The Trojans answered in the bottom of the inning with six runs on just three hits and two big Middle Tennessee errors. King was hit to leadoff and Keel's grounder in the hole to short was booted by Beachum. Dew then singled up the middle against Woodward, plating King. Robinson was hit to load the bases before Nick Smith's soft grounder went right between the legs of Bishop at first, allowing two runners to score and Robinson to move to third, cutting the deficit to 6-4. Beau Brooks then hit into a 4-6-3 doubleplay, but Robinson scored to make it a one-run game. Blake Green delivered the big blow, lifting a hanging slider just over the short porch in leftfield to tie the contest at six. After a walk to Dru Rymer, Kevin Wiedlich blooped a single down the rightfield line. Rymer was going on the pitch and never stopped running. The throw from Taylor was adequate and Rymer slid by McKenry at the plate. Umpire Kidd McGhee called Rymer safe, though no one was quite sure whether he touched the plate on the slide. Dew got the final three outs, including a pair of strikeouts, setting off the celebration for the school's first conference championship in the Sun Belt. Beachum was 2-for-4 in the contest, his 100th career multi-hit game, and Kendrick added two hits for the Blue Raiders. **GAME NOTES**

Wayne Kendrick's single in the first extended his hitting streak to 10 games ... Jeff Beachum singled in both the second and eighth innings, his 33rd multi-hit game this season and the 100th of his career ... Allan Woodward's appearance on the mound was his first since May 10 versus Memphis.

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