

May 23, 2006

This Week in Blue Raider Baseball

MT Media Relations

MIDDLE TENNESSEE IN SBC CHAMPIONSHIPS: Middle Tennessee is 13-6 in Sun Belt Championship action since joining the league in 2001 and has played in the tournament championship game the past three years and four of the five tourneys in which it has participated. The Blue Raiders won the 2003 SBC Tournament in Lafayette, La., and dropped tournament finals to South Alabama (2001-Lafayette, La.; 2005-Miami, Fla.) and Western Kentucky (2004-Mobile, Ala.). Middle Tennessee is 2-0 (2001, 2004) against Arkansas State, 0-3 versus South Alabama (2002) and 5-1 against Louisiana-Lafayette (2003-05) during SBC Tournament action.

TOURNAMENT TICKETS AVAILABLE: Tickets for this week's Sun Belt Championships are available through the Western Kentucky Ticket Office by calling 1-800-5BIG-RED. Tournament booklets are \$35. Individual game tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for children and senior citizens and free for children under two and students from all Sun Belt schools.

BASEBALL TOURNAMENT ON XOS: The Sun Belt Conference will continue to bring the league's championships to the web, making it easy for fans to watch competition from their computer. Registration is now open at www.sunbeltsports.org for this week's 2006 Sun Belt Aéropostale Baseball Championships in Bowling Green, Ky., May 24-27. If you cannot be in Kentucky, SunBelt.TV has you covered with complete coverage of every game of the tournament for just \$15.95.

TIDBITS: Middle Tennessee is only 5-7 in the month of May this season after posting a 36-13 mark in the month of May from 2003-05 ... The Blue Raiders have recorded double-digit hits in a game 35 times this year, recording a 24-11 mark in those contests. The squad has not collected double-digit hits in a game in the last four contests, all losses. From March 25 to May 14, the Blue Raiders had more than 10 hits in a contest in 27 of 29 outings.

EARLIER THIS SEASON AGAINST SOUTH ALABAMA: Middle Tennessee dropped all three games in Mobile, all in very different fashion. On Friday **Matt Scott** and P.J. Walters hooked up in a great pitcher's dual in a game that started more than an hour late. Scott tossed nine shutout innings and Walters 10 before the rains came again. In the 13th the game was suspended until Saturday with a runner on first. When the game restarted USA bunted the runner to second and Patrick Weaver singled home the winning run in a 1-0 Jaguars victory. In the scheduled Saturday game, the Blue Raiders took a 6-4 lead into the eighth before the home team plated eight runs on just five hits and two Blue Raider errors for a 12-6 win. Sunday was a seesaw affair, with Middle Tennessee overcoming a 7-1 deficit to tie the game at nine in the sixth. USA plated four runs in the bottom of the sixth and then seven more in the seventh to win, 20-10, in seven innings in a game called because of the 10-run rule. Box scores from those contests and all games between the two teams since Middle Tennessee joined the Sun Belt are in the back of this notes package.

AGAINST THE JAGUARS: **Jeff Beachum** is 16-for-50 (.320) with two doubles and five RBIs in 11 career games against South Alabama. **Chase Eakes** is 6-for-23 (.268) with three doubles and three runs scored in eight career games, while **Nathan Hines** is 10-for-28 (.357) with three doubles, four runs scored and six RBIs in seven career games. **Michael McKenry** has 12 hits in 32 at-bats (.375) with six RBIs in eight career outings as well.

SBC TOURNAMENT VS. SOUTH ALABAMA SBC: Middle Tennessee and South Alabama have met three times in the Sun Belt Championships, with the Jaguars winning all three meetings, including twice in the tournament championship game. USA is the only team to post a winning record in the SBC Championships against Middle Tennessee. South Alabama won, 11-2, in the title game in 2001 in Lafayette, La., and again in the first round the following season, 2-1. Last year the Jaguars defeated Middle Tennessee, 9-2, in the championship game again. Box scores from those contests and all games between the two teams since Middle Tennessee joined the Sun Belt are in the back of this notes package.

SBC TOURNAMENT VS. ARKANSAS STATE: Middle Tennessee and Arkansas State have played twice in the Sun Belt Championships, with the Blue Raiders prevailing in both games. Middle Tennessee won, 4-0, in the first round in 2001, with Dewon Brazelton tossing a four-hit shutout in that contest. In 2004 the Blue Raiders defeated ASU, 12-2, in the game shortened to seven innings because of the 10-run rule. Chris Mobley got the win in that game, giving up just four hits, and Shane Kemp was 3-for-4 with three runs scored, four RBIs, a double and two home runs. Box scores from those contests and all games between the two teams since Middle Tennessee joined the Sun Belt are in the back of this notes package.

AGAINST ARKANSAS STATE: Senior **Jeff Beachum** leads the way, batting .318 (14-for-44) in 12 games with three doubles, four RBIs and nine runs scored. Sophomore **Nai Nathan Hines** is 7-for-22 (.318) with a home run, four RBIs and six runs scored in five contests, while senior Todd Martin is 7-for-17 (.412) with two home runs and nine runs scored in five outings. Junior **Michael McKenry** is batting .333 (8-for-24) in eight career games versus ASU with two home runs, eight RBIs and six runs scored. Junior **Matt Scott** has won both of his career starts against Arkansas State (2005-06) and tossed one inning of relief as a freshman. Senior **Marcus Taylor** is 8-for-25 (.320) in eight career games with four doubles and four runs scored.

SBC TOURNAMENT VS. LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE: Middle Tennessee and Louisiana-Lafayette have met six times in the Sun Belt Championships, all in the last three years, with the Blue Raiders eliminating the Ragin' Cajuns all three seasons from the tournament. In 2003 Middle Tennessee won, 6-4, in the first round and defeated UL again two days later, 10-2, to move into the championship game. In 2004 the clubs met three times in a span of less than 48 hours. The Blue Raiders won, 8-6, in the second round but were defeated, 6-2, the following night. In the third contest Middle Tennessee outlasted the Cajuns, 15-10, advancing to the tourney championship game again. Last season the Blue Raiders and UL met on the third day of the tournament again, with Middle Tennessee winning, 7-5, and moving into its third straight championship contest. Box scores from those contests and all games between the two teams since Middle Tennessee joined the Sun Belt are in the back of this notes package.

AGAINST THE RAGIN' CAJUNS: Senior **Jeff Beachum** is batting .403 (31-for-77) in 18 career games against Louisiana-Lafayette with six doubles, 12 runs scored and 14 RBIs. Junior **Michael McKenry** is 11-for-34 (.324) in 10 career outings versus UL with two home runs, nine RBIs and 11 runs scored. Junior **Matt Scott** has faced the Cajuns five times in his career, posting a 1-1 mark with one save.

RAIDERS HEAD INTO SBC TOURNAMENT STRUGGLING OFFENSIVELY: Middle Tennessee has done one thing with remarkable consistency all season long - pound out hits and score runs. The Blue Raiders have recorded double-digit hits in 35 of 51 games this season, including a stretch of 27 games in 29 outings from March 25-May 14. But the Blue Raider bats have gone cold in the last four games, collecting just 28 hits in the four contests, resulting in only 10 runs and a four-game losing streak. Middle Tennessee has hit

just .209 as a team in the four outings, including .172 with runners on base and .158 with runners in scoring position. The Blue Raiders have stranded 35 runners in the four games, as well, and have not hit a home run during the stretch.

MARTIN LOOKS LIKE OLD SELF: Senior Todd Martin batted .412 last season, earning Third Team All-America honors despite a myriad of injuries. Martin has battled his swing as well as injuries in 2006, but the Cookeville, Tenn., native has regained his form from last year down the stretch. Martin had a career-best 17-game hitting streak come to an end over the weekend at Troy, the longest hitting streak for a Blue Raider in at least 10 years. During the stretch the Cookeville HS product batted .437 (31-for-71) with five doubles, seven home runs and 22 RBIs. He also walked eight times and posted a slugging percentage of .803. He has played centerfield for the Blue Raiders in 15 of the last 16 contests. Martin has raised his season average to .362, third best for the Blue Raiders, and leads the Sun Belt with 15 home runs. Martin's 15 home runs is tied for ninth and the senior needs two more to tie Bryan Peck (1999, 2000) and Jayhawk Owens (1990) for sixth on the single-season list. He also entered the single-season Top 10 in RBIs over the weekend and has 57 heading into this week's Sun Belt Championships, second on the club behind **Michael McKenry's** 60 RBIs.

KENDRICK FINDS HITTING STROKE AGAIN: Junior **Wayne Kendrick** suffered through a 7-for-37 (.189) slump from April 28-May 13, a stretch of nine games. But the second baseman, who has started all but one game this season, has regained his hitting stroke in the last five outings, batting .444 (8-for-18) with two walks and three runs scored. Even through his slump, Kendrick has continued to score runs this season for the Blue Raiders, tying **Jeff Beachum** for the team lead with 54. The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native also has 28 walks, third best on the squad, and his .427 on-base percentage ranks fourth on the club. He carries a 10-game hitting streak into this week's Sun Belt Championships, batting .333 (13-for-39) with two doubles, six RBIs and six runs scored during the stretch, the longest current streak for the Blue Raiders. Earlier this season Kendrick had a career-long 12-game hitting streak from March 25-April 15, batting .370 (20-for-54) with four doubles, nine walks, six RBIs and 17 runs scored.

SCOTT TAKES TOUGH-LUCK LOSS: Junior **Matt Scott** was roughed up on May 13 against Louisiana-Lafayette in one of the worst outings of his career, allowing seven runs on 11 hits in 4.2 innings. He started shaky last Thursday at Troy, giving up three first-inning runs, but settled down in one of his best efforts of the year. Scott took a tough loss in a 4-2 defeat, giving up four runs, two earned, on just six hits in seven innings of work, striking out six. He lost for the second consecutive start, the first time that's happened in his career, falling to 7-3 this season, but lowered his ERA to 3.43. The Smyrna, Tenn., native ranks seventh on the career wins list at Middle Tennessee with 20 and his 20-5 career mark is the second-best winning percentage of all time (.800). His seven innings at Troy also moved him into seventh place on the innings pitched list with 221.0.

MARRS GOOD AGAIN ON THE MOUND: Junior Nick Marrs earned Sun Belt Pitcher of the Week accolades on May 15 after working into the ninth against Louisiana-Lafayette in his first career start and picking up his first win of the season. The righthander allowed three runs on five hits and struck out six in that contest. Marrs followed that up with 5.1 innings on Saturday at Troy in 90-degree heat, giving up one run on five hits and striking out two. He got no decision after the Blue Raiders lost a 6-1 lead, but the Franklin, Tenn., native lowered his team-best ERA to 2.63. Marrs is 1-1 with one save in 12 appearances this season and 27.1 innings of work, striking out 22. Opponents are batting just .260 and he has walked just nine.

THE JEFF BEACHUM SHOW - CAREER: For much of the 2006 season, senior **Jeff Beachum** has put on a hitting display like few others in Middle Tennessee history, breaking career records and moving up Top 10 lists it seems in every other game. The Cordova, Tenn., native ranks in the Top 10 in eight career categories, including six in the Top 4. Beachum broke the career hits record on April 11 in dramatic fashion with his first home run of the season and has 315 hits heading into this week's Sun Belt Championships, just three behind the Sun Belt record held by Ernie Carr (Jacksonville Univ., 1985-88). He is also fourth in games played (221), tied for first in runs scored (171), first in at-bats (917) and singles (248), second in doubles (55), total bases (402) and sacrifices (25) and ninth in RBIs (134). His 55th double over the weekend at Troy moved him into seventh place on the all-time list in the Sun Belt as well, and his 2-for-4 day on Saturday against the Trojans was his 100th career multi-hit game. A full listing of Middle Tennessee career records appears on pages 18-19 of these notes.

THE JEFF BEACHUM SHOW - 2006: Not only has Beachum taken assault on the career record books at Middle Tennessee, but his single-season numbers are nearing record proportions as well. The Cordova HS product leads the Blue Raiders in hits (90) and doubles (16) and is tied for the team lead in batting average (.391). He needs only four hits to tie Josh Renick (2001) and Bryan Peck (2000) for the single-season hits record and three more singles to tie Craig Reavis (74, 1995) for the single-season mark in that category. His batting average would rank eighth best in school history for a season if the schedule ended today. He has 33 multi-hit games this season and has reached safely in 45 of the team's 51 games. The four-year starter is tied for the team lead this season with 54 runs scored and registered a career-high five hits in the May 9 contest against Memphis. Beachum had a 14-game hitting streak come to an end on April 26 against Tennessee Tech with a 0-for-4 effort, a career-long for Beachum during one season. He hit in 15 consecutive games spanning the end of 2005 and the first four games of this year. During the 14-game stretch, Beachum was 30-for-70 (.429) with five doubles, 13 RBIs and 19 runs scored. He also had a 12-game hitting streak come to an end over the weekend at Troy, batting .415 (22-for-53) with 13 runs scored and seven RBIs during the stretch.

MCKENRY FINALLY SLOWS DOWN: Junior **Michael McKenry** has shown the signs of wear-and-tear from catching 50 of the team's 51 games this season over the last seven games, batting just .250 (6-for-24) against Louisiana-Lafayette, Vanderbilt and Troy. The Knoxville, Tenn., native has a double, zero runs scored and just one RBI in those seven contests, but he has walked six times. The skid dropped his batting average to its lowest mark in more than 28 games - April 7 at New Orleans (.386). During a 21-game stretch from April 7-May 10, McKenry was 38-for-85 (.447) with five doubles, nine home runs, 25 runs scored and 35 RBIs. He also had 12 walks, was hit five times, had a .536 on-base percentage and an .824 slugging percentage during the stretch. His current .391 average is still tied for best on the club with **Jeff Beachum** and he leads the Blue Raiders in RBIs (60), walks (36), on-base percentage (.498) and slugging percentage (.688), as well as ranking second in hits (75), doubles (12) and home runs (13). McKenry's 60 RBIs is tied with **Nate Jagers** (2005) for fifth place on the single-season list and he needs six more to tie Jeremy Owens (1990) and Justin Sims (2001) for third.

CAMPBELL COMES UP WITH BIG HITS: Junior **Matt Campbell** has played sparingly in his career but has taken advantage of his limited opportunities this season, delivering game-changing hits for the Blue Raiders in three of his eight Sun Belt starts. Campbell hit a game-winning home run in the eighth inning against Western Kentucky on April 14, his first career start in a Sun Belt game and just the second start of his career in any game. The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native again took advantage of playing time two weekends ago against Louisiana-Lafayette, tying the game early with a solo homer in Saturday's 7-5 loss before hitting a two-run shot in Middle Tennessee's 5-4 triumph on Sunday. Campbell was

3-for-7 in two starts against UL and is batting .289 in 16 games this season, including 10 starts, with three home runs and seven RBIs.

TAYLOR FINDS HOME RUN TROT: Senior **Marcus Taylor** has been in and out of the lineup all season, starting 31 games and playing in 43 overall for the Blue Raiders. His talent and raw power have never been questioned, only his ability to put the ball in play with consistency. In his career the Louisville, Ky., native has 137 hits in 151 career starts, with 71 of the hits going for extra bases (37 doubles, 4 triples, 30 home runs), or 51 percent. But he has also struck out 193 times in 562 career at-bats (34 percent), tying the all-time record for strikeouts with Jordan Beddies (1994-97). Taylor took advantage of three straight starts at Florida International on May 5-7, homering in all three games, scoring five times and driving in four runs. He struck out only once in 13 at-bats. He continued the string of good plate appearances in games against Memphis on May 9-10, collecting three hits in seven at-bats, including another home run, and just one strikeout. He added his 11th home run of the season on May 14 against Louisiana-Lafayette, a three-run shot that pulled the Blue Raiders within 6-4 in a loss. The Henry Clay HS product now has 26 RBIs and a .580 slugging percentage for the season, with 21 of his 32 hits going for extra bases. He had a seven-game hitting streak end on Friday against UL, batting .400 (10-for-25) with four doubles, four home runs, seven RBIs, nine runs scored and more important, just two strikeouts, during the stretch. He has five home runs in his last 11 games.

HORN CONSISTENT ALL SEASON: Senior **Josh Horn**, a first-year starter and walk-on, has been a consistent performer for the Blue Raiders all season at the hot corner and at the plate. The Shelbyville, Tenn., native has started every game at third base in 2006, making all of the routine plays and several outstanding grabs. At the plate is where Horn has made his biggest contribution, though, batting .321, fifth best on the squad among regulars, with 12 doubles, six home runs and 35 RBIs. He has batted ninth in 34 of the 51 games this season, driving in runs and starting rallies, as he has also scored 36 times. His average has not fallen below .305 and the Columbia State CC transfer batted .377 (26-for-69) with four doubles, three home runs, 19 RBIs and 17 runs scored in 17 contests from April 18-May 16. He had a career-best nine-game hitting streak come to an end May 15 against Louisiana-Lafayette. During the nine-game stretch, Horn batted .462 (18-for-39) with seven multi-hit outings, 12 runs scored and 14 RBIs.

WARREN SCUFFLING DOWN THE STRETCH: Junior **Adam Warren** has been one of Middle Tennessee's most consistent performers all season, batting above .330 for most of the year and driving in 42 runs, third best on the club. But the Jackson, Tenn., native has found rough sledding at the plate in the last seven contests, batting just .154 (4-for-26) with three runs scored and one RBI. He has hit just .286 (12-for-42) in the month of May with five RBIs and six runs scored. His season batting average has dropped to .305, its lowest since the middle of March.

WOODWARD STELLAR AT THE END: Senior **Allan Woodward** stepped into the closer's role last season for Middle Tennessee, stabilizing the bullpen in the Blue Raiders run to the Sun Belt Tournament championship game. The righthander has been stellar in almost every appearance this season, though his 4.45 ERA says otherwise. Subtract two appearances for Woodward this season - April 7 at New Orleans and April 23 at South Alabama - and the Columbia, Mo., native is 2-2 with four saves and a 1.88 ERA in 28.2 innings of work, striking out 37 with opponents batting only .238. In those 22 appearances, Woodward has allowed just 25 base hits, three for extra bases (both doubles, one home run), and six earned runs.

STREAKS: Junior **Wayne Kendrick** is batting .333 (13-for-39) with two doubles, six RBIs

and six runs scored during his current 10-game hitting streak, the longest current stretch for a Blue Raider. No other player has hit safely in more than three straight games. This season Middle Tennessee has put together six hitting streaks of at least 10 games, including **Jeff Beachum** (14, 12), Todd Martin (17), **Nathan Hines** (14) and Kendrick (12, 10). A full listing of double-digit hitting streaks by Middle Tennessee players in the last eight years appears on page nine of these notes.

IN THE SUN BELT STATISTICS: Seniors **Jeff Beachum** and Todd Martin and juniors **Michael McKenry** and **Matt Scott** are all ranked in the Top 10 individually in the Sun Belt statistics. Beachum and McKenry are tied for sixth in the SBC in batting at .391 heading into this week's Sun Belt Championships, with Beachum tied for third in the league in hits with 90. McKenry is tied for third in the conference in home runs (13) and ranks fifth in RBIs (60). Martin leads the Sun Belt in home runs with 15. Scott is ninth in the SBC in pitching with a 7-3 mark and a 3.43 ERA in 81.1 innings of work.

Printed on November 21, 2008

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/5283>