

# Horn delivers in clutch as Blue Raiders outlast South Alabama in extra innings

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## **BOWLING GREEN, Ky. -**

Middle Tennessee third baseman Josh Horn continued his outstanding senior campaign with perhaps the biggest hit of his Blue Raider career to lift the Blue Raiders to a 5-3 extra-inning upset of nemesis South Alabama in the opening game of the Sun Belt Conference Championships at Western Kentucky Wednesday morning.

- **Photos:** [MT vs. South Alabama](#)

Horn's two-out opposite field single into right field plated Matt Campbell and Adam

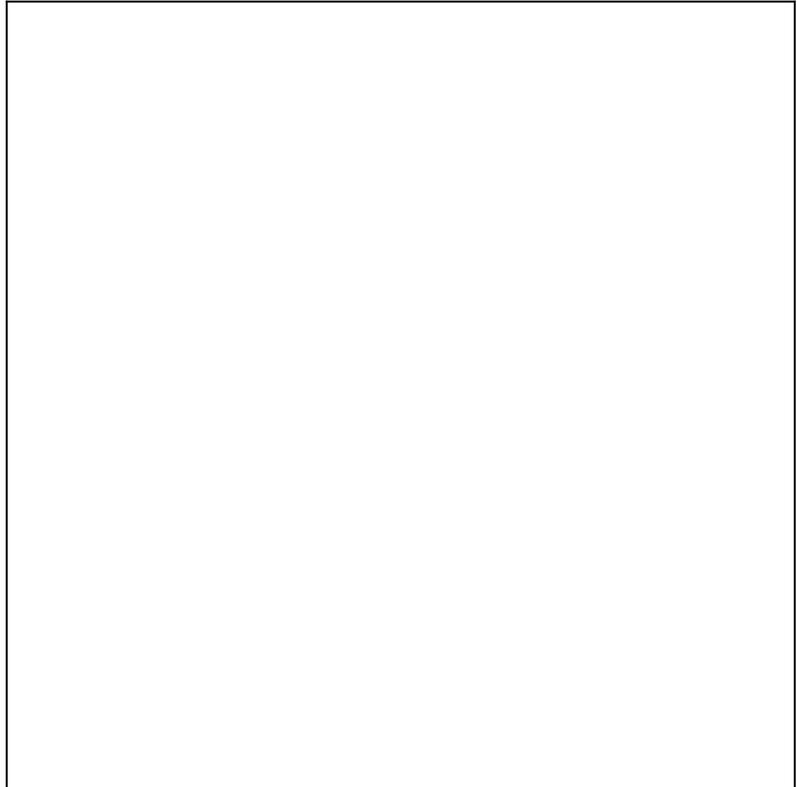
Warren, who had belted a two-out double to keep the 10th inning alive, as Middle Tennessee ended a seven-game losing streak to the Jaguars, including its first win in four tries in the Sun Belt Championships to advance in the winner's bracket.

Horn's heroics sends the Blue Raiders (28-24) into a showdown against Louisiana-Lafayette in the winner's bracket semifinals Thursday at 4 p.m. The Ragin' Cajuns survived Arkansas State's upset bid with an 8-7 win Wednesday.

"I can tell you our ball club is very excited to beat a team of South Alabama's caliber," Middle Tennessee coach Steve Peterson said. "We have a great deal of respect for them and it was a good day for us. We had timely hits and really good pitching and you have to at this point in the season."

While the timely and clutch hitting were key components in the win, the much-anticipated pitching match-up between Middle Tennessee's Matt Scott and South Alabama's P.J. Walters - each club's respective ace - lived up to the billing. The two put on a pitching masterpiece during their regular-season match-up on April 21 in Mobile, Ala.

They produced a sequel in the championship opener; however, the outcome was different



than their previous encounter as Middle Tennessee rallied for the dramatic win. In their previous meeting this season, Scott pitched nine shutout innings and Walters upped him one with 10 shutout innings before each settled for a no-decision in a game eventually won by South Alabama, 1-0, in 13 innings.

Neither pitcher was around for the decision again Wednesday but each made their mark. Scott worked eight innings, scattered eight hits, struck out six and walked two before turning it over to Woodward in the ninth.

The senior closer retired all six batters he faced to improve to 3-2 on the season and earn the victory. Walters (10-3) worked into the 10th inning but was lifted with two outs in the inning and was saddled with the loss.

Middle Tennessee scored more runs against Walters in the first inning of Wednesday's championship opener than it did in 10 innings against him during a regular-season outing in Mobile, Ala. Jeff Beachum, who was 2-for-6 with a run scored, doubled to start the game and scored on a clutch two-out single by McKenry for the early 1-0 lead.

South Alabama came back with two in the bottom of the fifth to take a 2-1 lead; however, the Blue Raiders evened the score in the sixth. Chase Eakes walked with one out and Dougie Birkofer came in to pinch run. Matt Campbell followed with a perfectly executed hit and run to put runners at the corners. Adam Warren's single to left field plated Birkofer to tie the game, 2-2. Walters avoided further damage by getting through Horn and Beachum with two runners aboard.

Todd Martin walked and scored on Nathan Hines' one-out single in the seventh, but South Alabama tied the game, 3-3, with one in the eighth to set up the extra-inning dramatics.

Hines lined out to start the inning but Dillon Heath drew a walk and was erased at second when Campbell hit into a fielder's choice. Warren doubled to put runners at second and third and Horn followed with his 62nd, and possibly biggest, hit of the season.

Woodward got the side in order in the 10th, with Horn making a big-time pick on a bunt attempt and Campbell making what Peterson called a "major-league" stretch at first base.

Beachum (2-for-6), Martin (2-for-4), McKenry (2-for-5) and Warren (2-for-5) all had multi-hit games for the Blue Raiders.