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Raiders Fall One Game Short, Drop 10-6 Decision

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. - Middle Tennessee fell a game short of the NCAA Tournament for the second straight year, falling behind early, coming back to make it a one-run game before dropping a 10-6 decision to Troy in the Sun Belt Tournament championship game Saturday at Nick Denes Field.

- **Photos:** [MT vs. Troy Gallery](#)

The Blue Raiders (30-25) trailed 7-0 in the fifth inning before scoring three times in both the fifth and sixth innings, cutting the Troy (45-14) lead to one. But Josh Dew did it all in the contest, homering twice, including a three-run shot in the eighth, as well as tossing the final 3.2 innings on the mound for his fifth save of the season.

Troy starter Mike Felix (9-3) gave up four runs on six hits in 5.1 innings to get the win, walking five and striking out five. Dew allowed two runs on four hits, striking out five, including the final two batters of the contest.

Middle Tennessee starter [Matt Scott](#) (7-4) suffered the loss, working 3.1 innings on short rest. He allowed six runs on eight hits with two strikeouts. Scott tossed eight innings in Wednesday's 10-inning victory over South Alabama and was pitching for the third time in nine days. Scott was the first of six of seven Blue Raider hurlers in the contest.

"It was the first time since 1995 [Jason Stanton] that I brought someone back on two days rest," head coach Steve Peterson said. "Matt kept telling me he could do it and I wanted to give him the opportunity to win us a championship."

Dew homered twice in the game and drove in five runs, while leadoff batter Ian Craze had four hits.

[Michael McKenry](#) had two hits and drove in four runs for the Blue Raiders. Todd Martin and [Josh Horn](#) both added two hits, with [Jeff Beachum](#) and Horn both scoring twice.

Troy jumped out early with three runs in the first, starting with a leadoff infield single from the speedy Craze. Tom King singled to right on the hit-and-run, putting runners on the corners, and Clint Robinson was hit to load the bases. Dew's fisted infield grounder plated Craze and Blake Green continued his torrid hitting, collecting his ninth hit of the tournament, a two-run single to left.

The Blue Raiders missed a chance to get on the board in the bottom of the inning after a two-out double from Martin. McKenry and [Nathan Hines](#) both walked to load the bases, but Dillon Heath struck out to end the threat.

The Trojans went up 4-0 after a solo homer from Dew in the third, his league-leading 16th of the season.

In the fourth Jared Keel beat out a bunt single with one out before a single through the right side from Josh Blackwell, putting runners on the corners. Craze singled home a run with a hit to rightcenter, ending the day for Scott. Blackwell scored on a wild pitch later in the inning for a 6-0 Troy advantage.

The Trojans added another run in the fifth when Dew walked, Kevin Wiedlich doubled down the rightfield line and Edgar Ramirez had an RBI single to right.

Middle Tennessee plated three runs in the bottom of the inning and could have had more.

[Matt Campbell](#) doubled to leadoff and Horn followed with a single up the middle. Beachum then doubled down the leftfield line, plating Campbell, before a walk to [Wayne Kendrick](#) loaded the bases. Martin struck out looking but McKenry chopped a two-run single over the head of Keel at third.

A groundout moved the runners to second and third before a two-out walk to pinch-hitter [Chase Eakes](#) loaded the bases again. But [Marcus Taylor](#) struck out to end the inning with the Raiders trailing by four.



Michael McKenry gets ready to swing in Saturday's Sun Belt Tournament championship game. The junior had four RBIs in a 10-6 loss to Troy. (Bradley Lambert)

The Blue Raiders made it a one-run game with three more in the sixth, with Horn's one-out double starting the rally. Beachum was hit before a flyout by Kendrick. Horn moved to third on the play and scored on Martin's single to left. McKenry then tripled off the wall in leftcenter, missing a home run by just a few feet. Both runners scored on the play, cutting the deficit to 7-6.

[Allan Woodward](#) worked two shutout innings and Brett Smalley tossed one scoreless frame before walking Tom King and giving up a soft single to Robinson to start the eighth. [Jeff Kasser](#) came on and made a mistake to Dew with a full count. Dew ripped it over the wall in rightfield for his second round-tripper of the game, giving Troy a 10-6 lead.

Kendrick singled and Martin was hit with two outs in the Blue Raider eighth, but McKenry's shot to the rightside went right to Ramirez at second to end the threat.

Middle Tennessee lost in the Sun Belt Tournament championship game for the second straight season and the third time in five tries. The Blue Raiders also lost all four games to Troy this season, all in the last eight days.

"When one team beats another team four times, they proved they are the best team. It's as simple as that," Peterson said. "[Troy is] the better team. We were just hoping that we could get them one time and be the best team for a week.

"We ran into a team [Saturday] that was the best team and had rested arms and it caught up to us. I was hoping we could control them [offensively], but we got off to a rough start."

GAME NOTES

Senior [Jeff Beachum](#) played in his 225th career game, passing Clay Snellgrove for second place on the all-time list ... Todd Martin extended his hitting streak to five games with a single in the first ... [Matt Campbell](#) extended his hitting streak to four games with a double in the fifth ... [Josh Horn](#) extended his hitting streak to five games with a single in the fifth ... [Jeff Beachum](#) extended his hitting streak to five games with a double in the fifth ... [Michael McKenry](#) extended his hitting streak to seven games with a single in the fifth ... McKenry's three RBIs in the contest moved him past Justin Sims (2001) and Jayhawk Owens (1990) into third place on the single-season list with 67. McKenry singled and tripled in the game, finishing with 142 total bases this season, tying Josh Renick (2001) and Jamie Walker (1995) for sixth on the single-season list ... Todd Martin's RBI single moved him into a tie for sixth with [Nate Juggers](#) (2005) with 60 runs batted in this season ... [Allan Woodward](#) made his 26th appearance of the season, tying [Josh Anderson](#) (2005) and Kevin Davis (2000) for sixth on the single-season chart.