

Blue Raiders drop series opener to FIU, 9-3

Skinner homers in loss

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

FIU jumped out to an early lead and didn't look back as the Middle Tennessee baseball team fell to the visiting Panthers 9-3 on Friday evening at Reese Smith Jr. Field. "They strung together some hits early and it led to a couple big innings for them," head coach Steve Peterson said. "I think we had some opportunities later in the game, but we couldn't put the hits together." Hank LaRue and Will Skinner starred for the Blue Raiders offensively. LaRue went 2-for-2 at the plate with a pair of walks and a run scored, and Will Skinner was 1-for-4 and blasted his Sun Belt-best 13th home run of the season over the left field field wall in the fourth inning. FIU (30-16, 14-8 SBC) hopped out to an early 3-0 lead in the first inning before Middle Tennessee responded with a run in the second. LaRue reached on a single through



the left side, and eventually scored on a Jordan Rorex groundout to cut the deficit to two at 3-1. Following another Panther three-run frame in the third, Skinner homered in the fourth. Rorex and Ryan Ford combined in the fifth to bring the game back within three. After Rorex walked and later reached second, Ford knocked a single up the middle to score the run. Rorex ended the day ended the day 0-for-2 with a walk, a run batted in and a run scored. Ford was 1-for-3 with an RBI. FIU scored once in the sixth and twice in the seventh to put the game out of reach. On the mound, Daniel Palo got the start and allowed eight hits and six runs (one unearned) over three innings. Cody Tollison came on in relief, allowing two runs and striking out two over 3.2 innings, and Matt Drake recorded the final seven outs, giving up one run. Middle Tennessee (15-30, 7-15 SBC) was out-hit 13-5 on the day. The Blue Raiders will look to even the series up on Saturday afternoon at Reese

Smith Jr. Field. First pitch is scheduled for 4 p.m., and Hunter Adkins is slated to start.

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