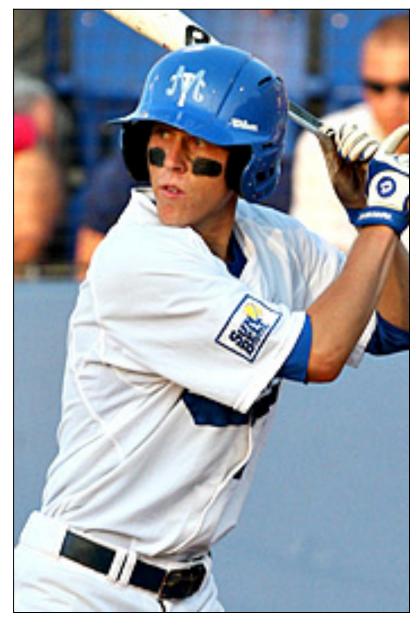
Stephens leads Blue Raiders to 12-3 rout of Tennessee

Blue Raiders post first win over Volunteers since 2008

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Ryan Stephens had a career day at the plate, coming up a single short of the cycle as the Blue Raiders posted a 12-3 win over the visiting Tennessee Volunteers on Wednesday evening at Reese Smith Jr. Field. "It was a good win," head coach Steve Peterson said. "We put up two big innings early, and it certainly helped. We had guys throughout the line-up contribute." The win marks the first for the Blue Raiders over Tennessee since a 13-6 victory in 2008. Stephens, a freshman, was 3-for-4 with a double, triple and home run. The Murfreesboro native ended the day with a careerhigh four runs scored and two runs batted in. "Ryan struggled earlier in the season," Peterson said. "But there has not been a day at practice where he hasn't been out here early and working. He's got a future ahead of him, and I'm glad to see him have



some success." "I was just trying to put the bat to the ball," Stephens said. "I realized I needed a single for the cycle, so it was in the back of my head. I didn't connect like I wanted to, but I sure heard all about it in the dugout from the other guys." Seven other Blue Raiders recorded a hit on the day as MT outhit UT 14-5. Will Skinner, also a Murfreesboro native, finished 2-for-4 with a careerhigh five runs batted in. The senior hit out his Sun Belt-leading 15th home run of the season in the second inning. Daniel Palo put up one of his best outings of the year, going seven innings and allowing four hits and two runs while striking out three. Palo did not allow a hit until the fourth inning.

"I thought Daniel looked as composed as I've ever seen him," Peterson said. "He looked very relaxed, and he was competing with the hitters. He threw some really good pitches." Palo's pitching combined with outstanding offense in the first three innings spotted the Blue Raiders an 11-0 lead. Johnny Thomas started things off on the first, reaching on an error and advancing to second. Stephens followed up with a double and moved to third on a Justin Guidry single, scoring when Skinner hit into a fielder's choice. A single by Hank LaRue plated Skinner, and Ryan Ford brought home LaRue with a single of his own. Thomas ended 1-for-4 at the plate with a run scored, and LaRue was 1-for-4 as well with a pair of runs and an RBI. Middle Tennessee (16-33) kept it going with six more runs in the second. Dain McNabb led off with a walk, and later scored on a Guidry single through the right side. Skinner kept the inning going with a three run blast to left. Back-to-back singles by Ford and Trent Miller brought home the final two scores to put MT up 10-0. Guidry and Miller both finished the day 2-for-4 with a run batted in, and Ryan Ford was 2-for-5 with two RBI. Stephens was responsible for the final two Blue Raider runs. The freshman led off with a triple in the third, scoring on a Skinner sacrifice fly and knocked out his first career home run over the wall in right field in the fifth. Middle Tennessee will now begin preparations for a weekend meeting at Louisiana, beginning on Friday. First pitch in Lafayette is slated for 6 p.m.

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