

Softball ends season against FIU

Ysais hits first career grand slam in 11-5 loss

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LAFAYETTE, La. - Middle Tennessee Softball's 2011 campaign came to an abrupt ending on Thursday as they team fell 11-5 in a wild extra inning affair on the second day of competition at the Sun Belt Conference Championships.

It was a game of momentum swings as the two teams jockeyed for winning position over the eight frame contest.



Junior Caty Jutson started the game in the circle and threw 3.1 serviceable innings of work. She allowed just one earned run off six hits over the span.

With the score 1-0 in the fourth, a costly Blue Raider fielding error would bring home two more unearned runs. Reliever Janele Robinson entered the game with the score 3-0 and stopped the Panthers. FIU then tacked on one more run in the top of the fifth.

With the Blue Raiders trailing by four runs in the bottom of the fifth, Natalie Ysais stepped to the plate with the base loaded. In the broiling Louisiana mid-day sun and with the season slipping away, the Yurupa, Calif., native blasted the biggest hit of her collegiate career, a grand-slam home run over the leftfield wall. This gave Ysais her first grand-slam homer as a Blue Raider. Four RBIs are the most in a single game for the junior.

It looked as if the Blue Raiders had caged the hard-hitting Panthers as Robinson was in control allowing just one hit over the next two innings.

MT had a chance to win in walk-off fashion in the seventh with pinch-runner Nina Dever on third and one out. A Dever came in for Kelsey Woodruff who led off the side with a double to centerfield. It was not to be, however, as the Blue Raiders could not come up with the game-winning hit and Dever was left stranded.

With the game tied at four in the top of the eighth, Robinson could no longer keep FIU at bay. The Panthers came out quickly scoring a run off an MT error. Freshman Shelby Stinnett came in a relieve a worn Robinson, but was ineffective as the Panthers would go on to tally six more runs to move the score to 11-4.

In the bottom of the eighth and the game seemly out of reach, senior Corrie Abel stepped to the

plate for what would be her last collegiate at bat. Abel went out in style as she knocked an RBI-double to score Nina Davenport from second, moving the score to its final tally.

Abel ends her career as one of the most decorated hitters in program history, holding the school career-records for most hits (238), singles (186), and total bases (314). She has the second most runs scored (105) and walks worked (64), while also holding the third most doubles (37) and triples (6). Her 78 career RBIs and batting average (.364) are fourth-highest for a Blue Raider.

Fellow seniors Kelsey Dortch and Brittney Banania went out well, both going 1-3. Dortch knocked a double with a stolen base, while Banania recorded her conference-leading 16th sac hit of the season.

On the season, Blue Raider softball finishes 18-33, including a 8-16 mark in Sun Belt league play. The team had the most conference wins since 2008 and posted its best overall home record (14-7) since 2000.

Go online to GoBlueRaiders.com for all Middle Tennessee softball updates.

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