Softball drops pair to begin season

MT defeated by Kansas and Stony Brook

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CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- The Middle Tennessee softball team allowed a combined nine first-inning runs on Friday, falling to Kansas 7-3 and Stony Brook 8-6 on the opening day of the Charlotte Classic.

In the first game, Kansas quickly jumped out to a 5-0 lead. The Jayhawks loaded the bases with no outs in the first inning and built a 2-0 lead on an RBI groundout and a run-scoring fielder's choice. Chanin Naudin's RBI single plated the third run of the inning before Lexi Bryant delivered a two-run double to make it 5-0, knocking Middle Tennessee starter Caty Jutson out of the game. Both teams went quietly in the second before Samantha Nieves knocked a two-run home run over the left field wall in the top of the third to cut the Jayhawk lead to 5-2. After relieving Jutson with one out in the first, Middle Tennessee (0-1) pitcher Shelby Stinnett held Kansas in check, allowing just two hits through the fifth inning. However, Kansas starter Kristin Martinez proved to be just as good, holding the Blue Raiders scoreless in the fourth through sixth innings. The Jayhawks finally got to Stinnett in the bottom of the sixth when Liz Kocon slapped a bases-loaded single through the middle to make it 7-2. Nina Dever pulled Middle Tennessee to within 7-3 on a two-out solo blast in the top of the seventh. But after Kaycee Popham reached on a hit-by-pitch, Kristi Marquez hit into a fielder's choice to end the game. Martinez (1-0) got the win for Kansas, going the distance while allowing just one earned run on six hits. Meanwhile the loss went to Jutson who fell to 0-1 on the season. The Blue Raiders were led at the plate by Nieves who went 2-3 with a pair of RBIs in her Middle

Tennessee debut. Kocon and Bryant both tallied two runs batted in for Kansas. Middle Tennessee again fell into an early hole in its second game of the day against Stony Brook. The Seawolves tallied three-consecutive singles off Stinnett to begin the game and jumped ahead 2-0 when a Marquez error at third base allowed two runs to score. Nicole Schieferstein then smacked a two-out, two-run single through the left side to put Stony Brook up 4-0. A Popham solo home run in the bottom of the second cut the Blue Raider deficit to 4-1 and Middle Tennessee erupted with three runs an inning later. Marquez singled and Nina Davenport walked to begin the frame before Kayla Toney reached on a fielder's choice to load the bases with one out. Natalie Ysais punched a single to left and Kelsey Woodruff doubled to bring the Blue Raiders to within 4-3. After Dever walked, Popham tied the game at 4-4 on a run-scoring single. Middle Tennessee grabbed the lead in the fourth when Nieves singled to bring home Bethany Jones. However Stony Brook responded with a three-spot in the fifth highlighted by a Jessica Combs two-RBI single to go ahead 7-5. Popham recorded a run-scoring single in the bottom of the fifth, making it 7-6. However, the Seawolves added an unearned run in the sixth to regain their two-run lead at 8-6. After both squads went quietly in their next at-bats, Kayla Toney reached first on a hit-by-pitch to lead off the bottom of the seventh and bring the tying run to the plate. Ysais struck out for the first out of the inning and consecutive infield pop-outs by Woodruff and Dever halted the Blue Raider rally, giving Stony Brook an 8-6 victory. The loss dropped Middle Tennessee's record to 0-2 while Stony Brook evened its record at 1-1. Alexandra Clark (1-0) went 2.2 innings, giving up four earned runs on four hits to receive the victory. Stinnett fell to 0-1 on the campaign after allowing three earned runs on seven hits in 4.1 innings of work. Popham went 3-3 at the dish with three runs batted in to lead the Blue Raiders while Combs and Schieferstein each notched two RBIs to pace Stony Brook. "Obviously this is not how we wanted to begin the season," said Middle Tennessee head coach Sue Nevar. "But we have to put these games behind us and come out and fight tomorrow." Middle Tennessee will look to rebound on Saturday when the Blue Raiders meet tournament host Charlotte at 11 a.m. CT. The Blue Raiders will then play again either at 1 p.m. or 3 p.m. depending on the results of the other games.

Follow every pitch of the Charlotte Classic via live stats courtesy of Charlotte which can be accessed at Charlotte49ers.com. Periodic updates will also be provided via the Middle Tennessee softball social media pages on Twitter @MT_Softball and on Facebook at the MT Softball page.

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