Baseball picks up fourth straight win with 7-6 decision over UALR

Blue Raiders will seek season's first SBC sweep on Sunday at 1 p.m.

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Final Box Score (PDF)

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee baseball team opened up a big lead early, but had to withstand a strong UALR rally on Saturday afternoon as the Blue Raiders held on for a 7-6 victory at Reese Smith Jr. Field. With the win, MT improves to 19-12 this season and secures its third Sun Belt series win of the season, improving to 7-4 in conference play. Three Blue Raiders had two-hit days, helping MT hop out to an early 7-0 advantage after three, but the Trojans (16-15, 3-8 Sun Belt) rallied for six in the fifth and sixth to put the game in doubt. The MT bullpen, led by Daniel Palo secured the victory, putting the Blue Raiders in position for a possible conference sweep on Sunday. Hank LaRue opened up the account for the Blue and White in the second with a lead-off triple, and Jordan Rorex followed up with a single to hand MT the lead for the second consecutive day. Later in the frame, Ryan Ford stepped to the plate with the bases loaded and laid down a bunt for a squeeze play at home to plate Rorex. Justin Guidry followed up with a double to left, and Johnny Thomas unloaded on 3-2 pitch in the ensuing at-bat, knocking a two-run shot off the scoreboard in right. "I was thinking it was going to be a fastball," Thomas said. "It was a full count, so I knew he was going to give me a strike or something close. He left it over the

heart of the plate, and I took advantage of it." Guidry and Thomas each ended with a pair of runs batted in and a score. LaRue started it off again in the next inning with a single to short and stole second to move into scoring position. Ryan Stephens singled to center to advance LaRue to third, and Robert Lawrence sent a deep fly to center to put MT up 7-0. LaRue ended 2-for-2 with two runs scored. Johnathan Frebis looked to have UALR, who came into the weekend with statistically the Sun Belt's best offense, under control early, holding the Trojans scoreless over the first four innings, but they finally broke through in a big way in the fifth. David Guarno and Tyler Cameron led off with singles and Cameron Bentley followed up with a walk to load the bases for Myles Parma, who singled through the right side to push two runs across. After picking up an out at the plate on a fielder's choice, Nick Rountree doubled to left center to bring the Trojans within three and chase Frebis from the mound. Frebis ended the day with 4.1 innings pitched with five earned runs and six strikeouts. Nick Montgomery came on in relief, and a Ford fielding error allowed another run to cross before a groundout and strikeout got the Blue Raiders out of the frame. UALR struck again in the sixth, taking advantage of a LaRue error and a Sean Bignall single to bring the Trojans within one run. Montgomery was able to work out of the jam once again, stranding the bases loaded on the way to his first win this season. Montgomery allowed a pair of hits and an unearned run in 1.2 innings of work. Paul Mittura and Cody Tollison combined to throw a scoreless seventh, and Palo picked up the final six outs of the frame, striking out the side in the ninth to earn his third save of the season. "It felt good to go out there and have an opportunity to get a save," Palo said. "The defense is great, and I have 100% confidence in those guys anytime there's a groundball. I go out there and just try to throw strikes. I have to come in and compete right away." The Blue Raiders will now look for their first conference sweep since 2010 on Sunday. Jonathan Sisco and his league-leading 1.38 ERA will get the start on the mound, and first pitch at Reese Smith Jr. Field is scheduled for 1 p.m.

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