

Softball bested in pair of pitchers' duels

Stinnett, Jutson pitch complete games

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. --

Despite a couple of stellar outings from starters Shelby Stinnett and Caty Jutson, the Middle Tennessee softball team fell to FIU by scores of 3-1 and 2-0 on Tuesday afternoon at Blue Raider Field.

Pitching was the story of the day on Tuesday as neither team had to go to the bullpen all afternoon.

Middle Tennessee took a 1-0 lead in the top of the third when Kristi Marquez took home on an illegal pitch from FIU starter Mariah Dawson.

The game stayed that way until the top of the fifth when the Panthers tallied a pair of runs to take a 2-1 lead. Brie Rojas began the scoring with a solo home run over the left field fence. Three batters later Kelsey Grabiak gave FIU the lead with a run-scoring single to score Rachel Slowik.

Both squads were limited to few scoring opportunities as Dawson and Stinnett were on their games all afternoon.

FIU added an insurance run in the top of the seventh with a hit and a Middle Tennessee error. After Alex Casais doubled to put runners on second and third with none out, Stinnett retired the next two Panthers. Shelby Graves then grounded to Samantha Nieves at short who threw to first, but Kaycee Popham was unable to secure the catch which allowed Rojas to score and give FIU a 3-1 lead heading to the bottom of the seventh.



Kelsey Woodruff led off with a walk and pinch runner Katherine Tucker reached third on a stolen base and wild pitch. She would go no farther, however, as Laura Dukes, Nieves and Bethany Jones all went down, giving FIU the 3-1 victory.

Stinnett took the loss for Middle Tennessee, allowing three runs (two earned) on seven hits in seven innings pitched. The win went to Dawson who gave up just one run on three hits while also tossing all seven frames.

Nina Davenport, Natalie Ysais and Marquez all recorded a hit to provide Middle Tennessee's offense. The Panthers were paced at the plate by Rojas who went 2-3 with an RBI and two runs scored.

The standard 30-minute break in between games did not wake up either team's bats as the second game of the doubleheader featured another pitcher's duel. Unfortunately for Middle Tennessee, the end result was the same as FIU starter Jenn Gniadek was just a bit better than Jutson.

While both teams amassed three hits over the first three innings, neither squad was able to put anything on the scoreboard until the Panthers took a 1-0 lead in the top of the fourth. After Slowik reached base via error, Abgail Tewey hit a hot-shot single to third base to bring her home and allow FIU to take a 1-0 advantage.

The Blue Raider offense was never able to get to Gniadek as Nieves' single to center in the fifth was the only hit Middle Tennessee could collect from the fourth through sixth innings.

Like the first game, FIU added a run in the top of the seventh when Erika Arcuri singled home Megan Horne to put the Panthers up 2-0.

In another display of the latter game mirroring the first game of the day, the Blue Raiders were able to get the lead-off runner on in the bottom of the seventh as Ysais drew a walk to begin the frame. Once again, though, Middle Tennessee was unable to record a clutch hit as the next three batters went down quietly to end the game.

Middle Tennessee dropped its record to 12-27, 2-12 while FIU improved to 24-19, 12-6.

Jutson was deemed the loser despite throwing a complete game, allowing only two runs (one earned) while scattering nine hits. The victory went to Gniadek who did not allow a run while surrendering four hits over seven frames.

Nieves went 2-3 at the plate to lead the Blue Raider offense while Arcuri and Tewey both picked up a run batted in for FIU.

Middle Tennessee will hope to get back to the win column on Wednesday when the squads meet in the final game of the three-game series. First pitch is scheduled for noon.

Follow the Blue Raider softball team on Twitter @MT_Softball and on Facebook at the MTSU Softball page. Also, stay up-to-date on the team with the latest softball news and information at the brand-new "Softball Notebook" page which can be found [here](#).

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