

Five-run fourth lifts softball to 8-4 win over Western Kentucky

Toney, Woodruff homer; Jutson tosses six strong

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BOWLING GREEN, Ky. -- A five-run fourth inning featuring a pair of two-run home runs by Kelsey Woodruff and Kayla Toney propelled the Middle Tennessee softball team to an 8-4 victory over Western Kentucky on Tuesday evening at the WKU Softball Complex.

After tallying just two hits over the first three innings, the Blue Raider offense broke out in the top of the fourth with a five-run frame. Woodruff got the scoring started with a two-run blast over the wall in right-center field. Three batters later Toney – making her first appearance in the lineup after missing the last 14 games due to injury – put Middle Tennessee up 4-3 with a two-run shot of her own. A double steal of second and home then allowed the Blue Raiders to make it 5-3.

The Lady Toppers got the scoring started Tuesday night with three runs in the top of the second. Following a Preslie Cruce walk, Laura Smith hit a two-run home run

to straight-away center field. Western Kentucky added another run later in the inning via an infield single and error by Middle Tennessee shortstop Samantha Nieves to make it 3-0.

An inning after the Blue Raiders built their 5-3 lead, run-scoring singles by Natalie Ysais and Nieves



gave Middle Tennessee a 7-3 advantage. The Lady Toppers then responded in the bottom of the frame as they manufactured a run on a hit, stolen base, wild pitch and sacrifice fly to cut it to 7-4.

The Blue Raiders tacked on another run in the top of the seventh with a couple of hits and aggressive base running. Nina Dever reached on a fielder's choice and then stole second. After Ysais went down swinging, Toney slapped a single to the third baseman Cruce who threw to first but was unable to get Toney. Never slowing down, Dever raced home from second on the play, beating the throw home from first baseman Ciara Garcia to give Middle Tennessee an 8-4 lead.

Western Kentucky threatened in the bottom of the seventh, loading the bases with two outs. Middle Tennessee pitcher Caty Jutson got Cruce to fly out to Davenport in center, however, to end the game as the Blue Raiders came away with an 8-4 victory.

"I am extremely happy for our team today," said Middle Tennessee head coach Sue Nevar. "We have come so close recently and tonight we were finally able to finish a game. We came out and played with an aggressive, never-say-die attitude and it resulted in a big win for us."

With the win, Middle Tennessee improved to 14-30, 4-15 while the Lady Toppers fell to 27-19-1 overall, 9-9-1 in the Sun Belt.

Jutson got the win for Middle Tennessee, tossing six innings of relief while giving up just one run on seven hits. The defeat went to Western Kentucky reliever Emily Rosseau who surrendered five runs (four earned) in four innings.

Toney and Woodruff's two-run home runs powered Middle Tennessee's offense. Meanwhile Laura Smith led the Lady Toppers with her second-inning home run.

The Blue Raiders will look to build off Tuesday's victory when they return home to face UT-Martin on Wednesday at 4 p.m. CT.

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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