Blue Raiders' defensive struggles prove costly at FIU

MT looks to even series Saturday at 5 p.m. CT

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Final Box Score (PDF)

MIAMI - The Middle Tennessee baseball team took a 4-2 lead in the sixth, but four unearned runs in a six-run frame for the FIU Panthers provided the dagger in the Blue Raiders' 8-4 loss on Friday at FIU Baseball Stadium. The Sun Belt's leading defensive team had a rare off night, as MT's four errors in the contest proved costly. "When we gave FIU a break, they took advantage of it," head coach Steve Peterson said. "We have to play defense. We have to make those plays and get back to playing our brand of baseball. It happens, but we have to put it behind us. Hopefully we can rebound from this and come back on top tomorrow." After a solo shot by Aramis Garcia gave the Panthers a 1-0 lead in the third, the Blue Raiders responded with a three-spot to take the lead in the top of the fifth. Ryan Stephens' leadoff single and stolen base kick-started the offense. Robert Lawrence dropped down a sac bunt, but an errant throw by FIU starter Eddy Pidermann (8-1) plated Stephens for the equalizer and put Lawrence at second. Ryan Ford took a walk before Justin Guidry smacked a double off the rightfield wall for the go-head run, then Ethan Williams scored Ford with an RBI-groundout for the two-run cushion. The Panthers cut it to 3-2 in the bottom of the fifth using three consecutive hits, but MT got it back in the sixth thanks to heads up base-running by Johnny Thomas. Thomas singled, stole second, made his way to third on a wild pitch and scored on Stephens' deep

fly to left for the 4-2 advantage. The wheels fell off in the Panthers' half of the six, as a pair of MT miscues led to six runs for FIU. After Jabari Henry led off the frame with a double, Paul Mittura (2-1) came on in relief of Hunter Adkins. Mittura gave up a pair of singles sandwiched around two errors, scoring four runs to give FIU the two-run lead. Three more base-hits, including a two RBI-single from Mike Martinez, accounted for the 8-4 Panther lead. Despite allowing just one earned run on five hits in three innings, Mittura suffered his first loss of the season after the Panthers tagged him for five total runs. Pidermann earned the victory for his six-inning performance, while John Caballero tossed three innings of one-hit ball for the save. The Blue Raiders look to bounce back Saturday when Johnathan Frebis takes the mound. First pitch is slated for 6 p.m. ET/5 p.m. CT and Dick Palmer will have the call on WMOT, in addition to GoBlueRaiders.com.

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