Stephens' career day leads to 13-3 victory over FIU

Centerfielder goes 4-for-4 with three RBI

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Final Box Score (PDF)

MIAMI - Ryan Stephens' 4-for-4, three-RBI day highlighted a 17-hit performance for the Middle Tennessee baseball team in a 13-3 run-rule victory over FIU on Sunday at FIU Baseball Stadium. Seven Blue Raiders drove in a run and five recorded multiple hits on the afternoon. "It was great baseball all the way around, and that's the way we should be playing," Stephens said. "We put a ton of hits together and that's what you have to do to win a ballgame. We had been slacking with runners in scoring position, but today showed we can get the job done. Down two games, you have to battle because it's do or die, and that's what we did." Ethan Williams matched Stephens with a trio of RBI, going 3-for-4 at the plate, while Ryan Ford and Trent Miller each drove in a pair of runs. "What a great day we had swinging the bat," head coach Steve Peterson said. "We matched up very well with their bullpen, stayed aggressive and had some clutch at-bats. After getting beat twice, that says something about my team, that they're not going to cash their chips in. Ryan Stephens just had a career day, and hopefully he'll continue that into the next weekend." But the hot bats were only part of MT's (26-23, 12-12 Sun Belt) dominant performance, as the pitching staff held the Panthers at bay in the seven-inning contest. Three hurlers combined to give up just three hits, with Joey McClung (4-1) picking up the win for his 2.2 innings of relief. McClung allowed one hit, while starter

Jonathan Sisco took a no-hitter into the fourth before giving up a pair of base-knocks and three runs through 3.2 innings. Jordan Cooper picked up the final two outs of the contest to seal the shortened victory. “Joey McClung did an outstanding job in relief,” Peterson said. “It was huge that he was able to close the door.” Stephens’ career day started with the game’s first run, a solo shot to lead off the third. He collected his second RBI after joining the hit parade in the fourth. Hank LaRue opened the frame with a walk, then Williams, Johnny Thomas and Robert Lawrence pounded consecutive RBI-doubles before Stephens’ base-knock made it a 5-0 lead. The Panthers (28-20, 13-11 SBC) closed the gap to two in the fourth, putting their first and only runs on the board, but McClung’s strikeout of leadoff batter Pablo Bermudez with two on and two out minimized the damage. Still leading 5-3 in the sixth, the Blue Raiders exploded for eight runs, marking the second time this season MT has accumulated eight runs in an inning (vs. South Alabama, 4/1/12). Stephens led the onslaught, churning out two hits, an RBI and a run in the frame. Eight consecutive Blue Raiders reached base thanks to six hits and a pair of walks, including two-run singles from Ford and Miller and a two-run triple from Williams. With MT on the brink of the run-rule victory, the Panthers managed to put runners at the corners with two outs in the sixth with Bermudez once again coming to the plate. It was Stephens again in the clutch, this time showing off his defensive prowess with a spectacular catch into the centerfield wall to end the threat and preserve the 10-run lead. After a hit batter opened the seventh, McClung and Cooper retired the final three in a row to claim the series finale for MT. The Blue Raiders will play their final conference home series this weekend, welcoming Louisiana for the three-game stretch. First pitch is slated for 6 p.m. CT on Friday. Saturday’s contest will feature Senior Day festivities prior to the 4 p.m. contest.

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