

Blue Raiders pound FIU to stay alive in SBC Tournament

LaRue hits fifth home run of the season

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[Final Box Score \(PDF\)](#)

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. -

Hank LaRue's three-run home run in the first inning propelled the No. 7 seed Middle Tennessee baseball team to a 12-6 win over the No. 3 seed FIU Panthers in the Blue Raiders' second game of the Sun Belt Championship on Friday afternoon at the Bowling Green Ballpark. LaRue was one of six Blue Raiders to have a multi-hit day at the plate, going 2-for-5 with three RBI and two runs. Johnny Thomas had a three-hit outing to go along with a run and an RBI, while Robert Lawrence and Jordan Rorex each drove in two runs and had two hits. Ryan Ford went 3-for-5 with a pair of runs in the leadoff spot, and Justin Guidry chipped in a pair of runs and hits as well. "We came out and got some runs early, so it was a big win for us," LaRue said. "This was a must-have and



(Johnathan) Frebis gave us a chance to win this game." The victory clinches a winning record for the Blue Raiders (30-28) this season, the 17th under head coach Steve Peterson, and marks the 15th season MT has collected at least 30 wins during his tenure. "The three-run lead right off the bat kind of set the tone that we were coming out swinging if you make mistakes," head coach Steve Peterson said. "We took advantage of mistakes they made in the outfield and behind the plate. Overall today, our elevator got to the top floor." Ford and Guidry opened the contest with back-to-back singles before LaRue made it a 3-0 lead with one swing. LaRue took the first pitch he saw over

the rightfield wall for his fifth home run of the season. "I was able to stay back on a change-up in the zone and get it out of the park," LaRue said. "We saw the ball well today and took good swings on good pitches, which usually equals success." After a solo shot from FIU's Aramis Garcia in the top of the second made it 3-1, the Blue Raiders exploded for a six-run third. LaRue got the offense rolling again with a one-out single then scored on an errant throw from third on a double-play attempt. Lawrence and Thomas followed with back-to-back RBI hits, then Rorex added the dagger with a two-run triple, forcing FIU started John Caballero (3-1) from the game. Caballero took the loss after giving up eight runs, all earned, on nine hits through 2.2 innings. The Blue Raider offense wasn't finished though, capitalizing on a pair of errors in the fourth for a run and adding two more insurance runs in the sixth as Ford once again led off the frame with a base-hit. After Ford stole second and moved to third on a wild pitch, he scored easily on Trent Miller's double to left-center. Lawrence added his second RBI of the day with another two-out single for the 12-3 advantage. In the meantime, Frebis (6-3) was solid through six on the mound, allowing just one hit through the first three innings before the Panthers (31-25) tacked on one run in the fourth and again in the fifth. The 2012 Sun Belt Freshman of the Year exited after 6.1 with six runs, seven hits and four strikeouts to his credit. The Panthers managed to push three runs across in the seventh on a two-RBI single and a sacrifice fly, but Daniel Palo didn't give up a hit in 2.2 innings of relief to close out the contest for the Blue Raiders. MT will take on Troy at 11 a.m. Saturday in the final game of the round-robin portion of the tournament. Troy and Arkansas State began at 3 p.m. today, and a Trojan win over the Red Wolves, coupled with an ASU loss to FIU tomorrow, would mean the winner of tomorrow's MT-Troy game would advance to Sunday's championship game to face fifth-seeded ULM. The Warhawks clinched Pool A's spot in the title game with a victory over Florida Atlantic Thursday.

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