Solid pitching, timely hits propel Blue Raiders to win over Southern Illinois

Ring takes no-hitter into fifth

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Hank LaRue's 3-for-4 performance, combined with five shutout innings from Garrett Ring, propelled the Blue Raider baseball team to a 4-2 win over Southern Illinois on Tuesday afternoon.

Ring (1-1) picked up his first collegiate win after taking a no-hitter into the fifth. He gave up just one hit and struck out three, while Daniel Palo picked up his second save of the season with the final 1.2 innings of action.

In addition to the three hits, LaRue drove in a pair of runs, including the game-winner, and also crossed the plate once. He and leadoff batter Ryan Ford got the offense rolling in the first inning with back-to-back hits. Ford singled and LaRue followed with a double in front of RBI-groundouts from Johnny Thomas and Trent Miller to give MT (11-5) a 2-0 lead in the first.

The score would remain 2-0 until the fifth when Ford and LaRue tag-teamed for another run. Ford took a one-out walk and made his way to second on a passed ball before scoring on LaRue's single to the left-center gap.

The Salukis (8-7) got on the board in the seventh using a walk and back-to-back singles to cut the deficit to two, but the Blue Raiders got it back in the bottom half of the inning when LaRue added his second RBI of the day, driving home Dain McNabb for the 4-1 cushion.

A home run from Ryan Rosthenhausler in the eighth accounted for SIU's final run.

The two teams will meet at 3 p.m. again on Wednesday to wrap up the two-game series.

HEAD COACH JIM MCGUIRE

On Garrett Ring settling down after the first few innings...
"He got a little bit better rhythm, but walks were a concern. Those deep counts really drove his pitch count up even when he got guys out. But he's learning and he's getting better. That's what we've got to have if we're going to be successful mid-week. We've got have to have a guy like Garrett Ring go out and throw five innings to not use five pitchers on a Tuesday."

On how pitching staff worked...
"We kind of laid the game plan out of what we wanted to do pitching-wise, and it kind of turned out like we wanted. Not the way circumstance-wise, but those were the three guys we wanted to use today."

On sticking with the same lineup as Sunday...
"It was hard to back away from the line-up we started with on Sunday and not go with them again today. We'll tweak it again tomorrow and Michael Adkins will be back behind the plate to catch. Dain (McNabb) did a another good job back there. That's important, not only his contribution behind the plate, but he got a big hit, stretched it into a double, and then we got that big hit after that and he ended up being the fourth run, which was huge. Instead of a 3-2 game, it was 4-2 and we were able to breathe a little better."

JUNIOR HANK LARUE
On slow start to the season...
"All three years now I've gotten off to slow starts. I'm not sure why that is, but I'm starting to get more comfortable now, starting to simplify some things up there now and starting to use the whole field a little bit more and that's helping me out."

On playing a new position...
"It's tough to play DH. It's not something I've been used to. It's not an excuse for not having success, but it was new to me. It's good though now to be at first base and be able to get back in the rhythm of the game a little more and be more mentally prepared for each at-bat. First base is new obviously from third last year. I had few mishaps today and fortunately our pitching staff was able to bail me out. It is different and I'm getting used to it. The other eight guys are playing great defense, too."

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