

Blue Raiders fall to Southern Illinois, 4-2

Stephens extends hitting streak to 12 games

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee baseball team suffered a 4-2 loss to Southern Illinois in the series finale on Wednesday afternoon at Reese Smith Jr. Field.

The Salukis (9-7) jumped on the board early with a pair of runs in the first. MT starting pitcher Jordan Cooper (1-1) hit the first batter of the game, walked the second then gave up a single to load the bases. Walks would prove costly throughout the contest, as the MT staff walked 10, including a one-out walk to first baseman Ryan Casillas to



plate the game's first run. Third baseman Cody Daily followed with a sac fly to make it 2-0.

The Blue Raiders (11-6) cut the deficit in half in the bottom of the second when catcher Michael Adkins took a walk to open the frame. Back-to-back two-out singles from leftfielder Trent Miller and third baseman Robert Lawrence loaded the bases before designated hitter Trevor Haggard walked to force in MT's first run. Miller and Lawrence each went 2-for-4 on the day.

The two teams traded runs in the third, with SIU capitalizing on a two-out error to push an unearned run across. MT responded with a leadoff double from Hank LaRue and RBI-groundout from Johnny Thomas to make it a 3-2 game. LaRue finished the day 2-for-4 with a run.

MT had a chance for another run in the sixth and seventh innings with runners at first and second in both frames, but the Blue Raiders were unable to take advantage.

The Salukis added an insurance run in the top of the ninth following Casillas' leadoff base-hit. Casillas worked his way to third on a walk and single before centerfielder Nick Johnson drove him home on a sacrifice fly, sealing the 4-2 win.

Centerfielder Ryan Stephens singled in the contest, pushing his hitting streak to 12 games.

MT used six pitchers in the contest, with Cooper suffering the loss after tossing three innings and giving up three runs, two earned, on three hits while fanning four. Kooper Kessler and Aaron Hyder combined for four innings of one-hit action, while Cody Tollison, Heath Slatton and Paul Mittura rounded out the final two innings.

Reliever Anthony Shimkus (1-0) picked up the win for SIU with two innings of one-hit ball. Starter Brad Drust limited the Blue Raiders to two runs on four hits over four innings.

The Blue Raiders head to Bowling Green, Ky., this weekend for the first Sun Belt series of the 2013 season. MT will take on WKU beginning Friday at 6 p.m. All games this weekend can be heard on WMTS 88.3 with Dick Palmer and John Callow on the call.

HEAD COACH JIM MCGUIRE

On today's game...

"I thought we kept it close and we had our chances. We just didn't execute offensively and it got us in trouble again. We didn't do a great job of it yesterday, but yesterday we pushed out enough to win, and today we just didn't do it."

On the offense today...

"We didn't swing the bat bad today. The wind was blowing in and it was a tough day to hit. We hit some balls hard like the one Stephens hit and the one that Rob hit to right field. Those are extra base hits on normal days, but the wind was blowing them in. Their pitchers did a good job only walking two while we walked ten. That was the difference in the game right there."

On making adjustments...

"We just have to execute better all the way around. We have to get ahead more in the count with the guys coming out of the bullpen. Basically everybody you saw today, that's our bullpen. We just happened to start Cooper today and got into trouble right off the bat with the walks and then the errors. We just didn't play very sound or very fundamental today. I am disappointed from that end of it, the positives are we worked out of those jams and we kept the game close. We did swing the bat okay when we got in situation, but we didn't execute the two bunts, that's what really hurt us."

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