

Blue Raiders end season with loss to WKU

MT finishes 2013 28-28, 11-19 in Sun Belt

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Middle Tennessee bounced back from a two-run deficit, but WKU scored the game-winning run in the ninth to capture the 3-2 victory and complete the series sweep on Saturday afternoon at Reese Smith Jr. Field.

With the loss, the Blue Raiders finish ninth in Sun Belt action with an 11-19 record and will not compete in the conference tournament next week. MT finishes the 2013 campaign 28-28 overall.

First baseman Ryan Huck delivered the game's first blow

with a two-run shot in the first inning for the Hilltoppers (28-27, 16-14 SBC), but the Blue Raiders responded with a run in the bottom of the frame to cut the deficit in half. Shortstop Ryan Ford opened the frame with a base-hit and later scored on leftfielder Dalton Henzman's bouncing single up the middle to make it a 2-1 game.

The two teams battled through the next five scoreless innings. After a tough first inning, MT starter Hunter Adkins settled in and retired seven in a row into the third, scattering three hits over the next 5.1 innings. Adkins exited in the seventh, giving up the two runs on six hits with five strikeouts and no walks.

WKU starter Austin Clay matched Adkins' effort with 6.2 innings of work. After giving up a run in the first, Clay stranded the tying run at third in the fourth, but couldn't avoid trouble in the seventh. He gave up a walk, base-hit and fielder's choice to load the bases before giving way to Brennan Pearson. Pearson promptly hit first baseman Trent Miller to tie the game at 2-2, but prevented any further damage with a fly ball to end the inning.

MT had another chance to push a run across in the eighth as Henzman led off with a walk but was left standing on second when the frame ended. The Blue Raiders would strand 10 runners in the contest.



Daniel Palo (1-1) took the mound for MT in the eighth and made quick work of the Hilltoppers with a 1-2-3 showing, but a pair of walks in the ninth proved detrimental. Palo sandwiched two walks around an error to load the bases, then hit the next batter to plate the winning run. He finished with 2.2 innings of work, allowing the one run, which was unearned, on one hit with two walks and two strikeouts.

Taylor Haydel (1-2) retired the only four batters he faced to pick up the win. Haydel tossed 1.1 innings of hitless ball, fanning two for the victory.

HEAD COACH JIM MCGUIRE

On the game...

"It's a very difficult day. It's hard to swallow the whole weekend really, but today was the worst of the three. Hunter threw well the first inning, and we had the game in control and had some chances to score some runs to break the game open, and we weren't able to do it. We left them in a position where all they needed was a run to take the lead. I thought Daniel threw very well today. It was just some hard luck. It just didn't work out the way we had hoped and it's very difficult for 14 seniors to go out on this note. It's very frustrating and very disappointing."

On the season...

"I think back to when we were 9-2 and things were going good and it seemed like we could really get going. Then we got into conference play and we just could not ever get it going, and it was very frustrating. Other than the weekend against Lafayette when we played well, we weren't very good in conference play and could not get over the hump and get it done. Things didn't fall our way but we didn't help ourselves much either and to end up .500 is really just what we were."

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