

FSU reaches Metro final

Seminoles win by 75-65 over 3rd-seed Cincinnati

By Gerald Ensley
Democrat staff writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Disaster's Darlings now have a date with destiny.

The rendezvous was assigned Friday night when the Florida State Seminoles beat the Cincinnati Bearcats 75-65 in the semifinals of the Metro Conference tournament.

Saturday afternoon a week ago, the Seminoles were 11-15 and in last place in the Metro Conference, a spot they had owned since their first conference game in January. Today at 2 p.m., the 14-15 Seminoles play on national television for the Metro championship and a trip to the NCAA tournament.

"Whatever words of happiness you want to put on it, that's how I feel right now," said FSU head coach Joe Williams.

Perhaps nothing more can be expected from these Seminoles, who at one point in the season had lost nine straight and 11 of 12 games. Perhaps just making it to their fourth Metro final in nine years (the last coming in 1980; they've never won) is enough to rescue this previously disap-

pointing FSU season. But, for what will be a game with top-seeded Memphis State, the Seminoles are still hungry.

"I don't consider this a miracle. I felt coming in that we were the darkhorse of this tournament," said FSU senior Maurice Myrick, who today will set a new Seminole career mark for games played when he participates in his 116th game. "We're more determined than ever to win the whole thing. Hopefully, something good is going to happen."

The key to good things Friday were an aggressive defense and a scorching second-half shooting. Six blocked shots added to six steals added to 71 percent shooting in the final 20 minutes equalled elimination for Cincinnati.

"It's clear that Florida State outplayed us," said Cincinnati coach Tony Yates, whose team holds hopes that its 16-13 record will earn it a postseason trip somewhere. "Two things happened. One was that they played effective offense, and drilled the baskets they had to have (shooting 52 percent for the game). Second was that

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they played excellent defense and forced us to take some tough shots.

"This doesn't surprise me. It's just a repeat of last season when Florida State started slow, then finished up as probably the hottest team in the league.

"They seem to be that kind of club."

Here in the city where the first artificial human heart was installed, new life clearly has been pumped into the Seminoles. As they did Thursday in an opening-round victory over Virginia Tech, the Seminoles played Friday with a new-found intensity and team spirit.

"We have become great friends, and we have a common goal," said FSU guard Dean Shaffer, whose nine assists gave him a sure-to-be increased tournament record of 21 (topping former Seminole Tony Jackson's 1980 record of 19). "Now, we are finding ways to win."

One of those ways, just as clearly, is 6-foot-11 center Al Gipson, who scored a team-high 22 points for FSU but more importantly grabbed a team-high 10 rebounds — all on defense.

Gipson got scoring help from freshman Jerome Fitchett (15 points), Myrick (13), Shaffer (11) and Joe Farrar (10). But with 53 points so far in this tournament (18 short of Keith Lee's tournament record of 71 set last year), Gipson has played with the coolness of a gathering storm.

"I'm getting my shot off better these last couple of games," said Gipson. "And we're just playing better overall, offense and defense."

The game was tight as a tick for the first 31 minutes.

Down 6-2 the Seminoles climbed back to lead 8-6 with 16:16 left in the first half.

Cincinnati, led by the 10 points apiece of Derrick McMillan and Myron Hughes, fought back to take a six-point lead, 20-14, with 11:12 left in the half.

But after Myrick made one of two free throws with 8:45 to go in the half, it became a one-point ball game, with the lead changing hands five times over the next two minutes.

It was during that span that FSU sophomore forward Randy Allen made his first appearance of the tournament, following a Monday ankle injury. He played only 45 seconds — and scared every Seminole teammate and fan by crumpling to the floor after jumping for a rebound.

Fortunately, it turned out that Allen, who had injured his left ankle Monday, had merely landed wrong on his right ankle.

"It scared him more than anything else," said Williams. "But I felt if he was favoring his left ankle that much, it probably was better that we rested him tonight. If he improves as much for tomorrow as he did for today, though, he'll play (tonight)."

After Allen was helped to the lockerroom, FSU took off on what seemed to be a knockout spree. A three-point play by Fitchett, followed by baskets by Myrick and Farrar staked FSU to a 32-26 lead with 3:28 to play in the half.

But Cincinnati kept coming, led by its Big Mac attack of McMillan and freshman Roger McClendon. Each of them scored a pair of baskets in the final three minutes of the half. Teammate Troy Thompson added another basket. And

though FSU countered with a driving layup by Myrick, the Bearcats held a 36-34 lead at halftime.

Things remained just as tight for the first 11 minutes of the second half. Shaffer hit a jumper off the fast break to tie the game 36-36. But McClendon, who led all scorers with 27 points, scored Cincinnati's first eight points of the second half on a succession of off-so-smooth jumpers from everywhere, and the game went back and forth.

Six times in those first 11 minutes of the second half FSU took a two-point lead. Six times, Cincinnati tied the score again.

"They were hard to get rid of," said Gipson. "They wanted it as bad as we did."

But, with the smaller Cincinnati unable to contain Gipson, the fight began to tilt in FSU's favor. With the game tied 52-52 with 9:34 to play, FSU erupted, scoring 10 straight points.

FLORIDA STATE (75)

	FG	FT	Rb	Ass	S	Min	TP
Farrar	4-7	2-4	4	3	1	34	10
Fitchett	6-8	3-3	4	1	1	38	15
Myrick	4-10	5-6	8	2	0	36	13
Shaffer	5-11	1-2	4	8	4	37	11
Gipson	8-14	6-11	10	1	0	35	22
Speights	1-4	2-2	7	0	0	15	4
Allen	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0
Martin	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	1	0
Totals	28-54	19-28	37	18	6	200	75

CINCINNATI (65)

	FG	FT	Rb	Ass	S	Min	TP
Henry	1-9	0-2	11	0	0	27	2
Hughes	6-12	0-0	10	0	1	31	12
Helm	5-8	0-0	4	1	0	27	10
McMillan	3-15	4-8	4	6	2	40	10
McClendon	12-18	3-5	8	1	2	34	27
Glover	0-0	0-0	1	0	0	13	0
Wilson	0-1	0-0	1	2	0	6	0
Thompson	1-2	0-1	2	1	2	9	2
Stiffend	1-3	0-0	0	2	0	13	2
Team							2
Totals	29-68	7-17	43	13	7	200	65

Halftime: Cincinnati 36, FSU 34; Total fouls: FSU 20, Cincinnati 27; Fouled out: none; Technical fouls: none.