

Martinez leads FSU to wild 7-6 triumph

By MARK RODGERS
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Lionel Martinez enjoyed one of his finest days as a Florida State baseball player Sunday. But he was almost upstaged by a Memphis State team that suffered through one of its worst, if not most embarrassing, days.

It was a baseball game that Memphis State almost turned into a free-for-all. With its head coach and graduate assistant having been ejected early in the contest and just one assistant left, the Tigers seemed determined to turn Seminole Field into their own playpen. But Florida State turned it into a cage, locked the door and sent the feisty Tigers back to Tennessee with their tails tied.

Jeff Ledbetter, who earlier smacked a three-run homer, delivered a two-out single in the bottom of the ninth inning to score Martinez and lift the Seminoles to a 7-6 victory over their Metro Conference rival before 882 fans.

Right-hander Jay Keeler (3-4)

earned the victory in relief as Florida State posted its second win in the three-game series.

Martinez — who scored five runs including a monstrous home run in the seventh inning — was clearly Sunday's hero, but on this day it was easier to spot villains than heroes.

Even after their coaches had been ejected, Memphis State players continued to argue with the umpires. The Tigers got so involved in one argument that they didn't notice when Martinez scored from second base in the fifth inning.

The Tigers (25-7-1) also berated umpires and FSU players with obscenities. Even after the post-game handshakes, Memphis State players continued to shout obscenities as the Seminoles walked down the third-base line to meet with Coach Mike Martin.

"The Memphis State players' actions are not what college baseball is all about," said Martin, whose squad

(Please see FSU, page 5B)

improved to 32-16. "That is due to a lack of self-discipline and a lack of class. That is not what we're trying to promote in college baseball today."

The shenanigans began early Sunday and never let up. With one out in the top of the third inning and the Tigers' Shane Young on first, starter Tim Phillips struck out Mike Vahaman.

FSU catcher Danny Dowell, spotting Young venturing off first, fired the ball to first baseman Chris Cawthon. The throw was wide, pulling Cawthon away from the bag. Young dove head-first back to the base as Cawthon turned quickly and tagged his right arm.

It appeared that Young's left hand reached the bag before Cawthon tagged him, but umpire Ted Mummert called Young out.

The call sent Memphis State first-base coach Mickey Thomas into a rage. Thomas, a graduate assistant, went nose-to-nose with Mummert in a heated argument. Thomas persisted and thrust his chest into Mummert, moving the umpire backward. Seconds later, Mummert signaled Thomas out of the game.

Head coach Bobby Kilpatrick took up where Thomas left off. Racing across the infield from the third-base box, Kilpatrick went chin-to-chin and also thrust his chest into Mummert. He soon was greeted with the same thumb that sent Thomas to the stands.

"We felt we got butchered here last night (Saturday night's 8-4 loss) and I was just telling him that we weren't going to take that today," Thomas said.

The double ejection left only assistant Mike Thieke left to run the team.

"We have our system and the players know what they have to do," Thieke said. "Having your head coach thrown out of a game is no excuse for losing. We should have won it anyway, but we didn't swing the bat. In the end, that's still what counts."

Thieke did not condone the Tigers' actions. "We have a very spirited team," he said. "They don't like to lose."

That was apparent as Memphis

