

Keller fells Miami with palmballs

FSU tops Hurricanes 11-3 to win three-game series

By David Lee Simmons

Democrat staff writer

Seems like every Sunday, Mike Martin likes to talk about the peaks and valleys of baseball, talking about how important it is keep things on an even keel and all that.

Of course, when the Florida State head baseball coach brings up the topic, it's usually after his team has just put a whipping on the other team.

Who would've thought this time around, Martin would bring out his peak-and-valley lecture after FSU throttled old rival Miami? That's what the Seminoles did, riding Clyde Keller pitching and homers by Brad Parker and Marc Ronan for an 11-3 win over the Hurricanes before 3,613 at Dick Howser.

It was a rare "third-game" blowout in what is considered one of college baseball's hotter rivalries, giving FSU a 2-1 win in the three-game series as well as a 32-10 record. The Seminoles, winning their eighth Sunday game in 10 outings, are ranked No. 12 in Baseball America and No. 15 in the Collegiate Baseball-ESPN poll. That should change, with the Hurricanes (26-12) coming into the weekend ranked 11th in both polls.

FSU has also won 10 of its last 11 games. That lone exception was the 8-1 Saturday loss to Miami and Alex Hernandez's overpowering pitching. But as Miami coach Ron Fraser had hinted before the weekend, the Hurricanes are struggling to find a dependable No. 3 starter. Overmatched by FSU's Keller, now 5-0 in five starts, Will Vespe (3-2) couldn't get past the third inning.

Call it an FSU peak.

"I think the character of this team really showed in playing well today after playing not so well (Saturday)," Martin said. "This is really a game of peaks and valleys. At least you don't have to wait a week (before playing again) like football coaches do."

No, FSU wanted to come back from Tim Nedin's shaky Saturday start right away with Keller, who has picked up three of his wins on Sunday as the No. 3 pitcher in each series. His performance, which included a season-high 11 strikeouts, was reminiscent of the March 26 win against California State-Fullerton, a 10-0 decision in which the Titans never got into the game.

"Clyde Keller has pitched very well for us this year," Martin said. "When he has his palmball cooking, he's awesome."



Keller

Martin threw Ricky Kimball in the ninth, he said, to get the reliever some work. It kept Keller from picking up his fourth complete game in five starts, but he was starting to tire a little, giving up home runs in the sixth and eighth innings.

"I threw a lot of pitches away, and they tried to pull a lot of them," Keller said. "And it didn't work."

The game started with that day-at-the beach weather that graces so many Sunday games, with students playing volleyball in a patch of bordered white sand on the intramural fields just past left field. Parker, overcoming a bout with the flu, broke open both that beach party and the game with his two-run shot over the left-field wall in the sixth inning.

Two students dove for the errant baseball quicker than anything that had gone over the net, with a bikini-clad woman beating out her male teammate.

FSU had knocked Vespe out of the game two innings earlier with a five-run third, but in this series, even a 5-0 lead doesn't seem like much. Parker's homer, followed later in the inning by a bases-loaded RBI single by Rob Bargas, made it 8-0 and may have broken Miami's back.

If it didn't, Marc Ronan's three-run shot in the sixth, which answered Jorge Fabregas' two-run homer in the top of inning, surely did the trick.

"We just came out swinging the stick," said Parker, who missed Saturday's loss with the flu. "We saw that Vespe wasn't particularly overwhelming on this day, and took advantage of it."

Every Seminole starter reached base.

SEMINOLE NOTES

- Now comes the University of Florida, No. 6 in Baseball America

and No. 9 in Collegiate Baseball-ESPN, for two games Tuesday and Wednesday. The Gators, who won two in Gainesville earlier in the season, tried to finish a game against Auburn on Sunday that had been rain-delayed Saturday. More rain halted the game, and a decision will be made today on whether the two teams will try and finish that game.

That decision factors into Florida's pitching plans for FSU, but chances are the Gator staff will be more rested because of the two days of rainouts.

- Martin said that lefthander Tim Nedin, who couldn't get past the first inning against Miami on Saturday, will go back to the bullpen. Martin also said that lefthander Mike Brady will start Tuesday, although righthander Brad Gregory will probably assume Nedin's position in the rotation as the No. 2 starter. Martin would love to have a lefthander in the rotation, so Brady's performance may weigh heavily on any further decisions.

- Catcher Pedro Grifol, a Miami native, went 6-for-12 in the series with three runs batted in, including a two-run bases-loaded single in the third inning Sunday.

