

Seminoles go 1-for-Miami

FSU sidesteps dreaded sweep

By David Lee Simmons
Democrat staff writer

MIAMI — To say the least, Greg Knowles is no Alex Fernandez. Nor is Will Vespe. Nor is Scott Sharts.

But then, neither is the rest of the University of Miami pitching staff. The

drop-off in quality between the freshman ace righthander Fernandez and the rest is fairly close to that of the continental shelf, and Florida State capitalized on that difference in an 8-4 baseball thumping of the Hurricanes on Sunday night before a Mark Light Stadium crowd of 3,360 and an ESPN television audience.

There's also a big difference between Knowles and FSU starter Clyde Keller, who struck out six over six-plus innings to improve to 9-0 and give FSU its first bit of decent pitching in the

series.

He also helped keep the Seminoles (42-15) from suffering their first three-game series sweep here since 1981, as well as ending a three-game losing streak. Miami, trying to pad its chances for hosting an NCAA regional, fell to 38-13.

It's been a long road trip for the tired Seminoles, who have played their last seven games away from Dick Howser Stadium, a true rarity. The double horror of losing four straight for the first time since 1985 and being swept by

their traditional rival would not have been a pretty sight.

Only next weekend's regular-season ending series at Cincinnati will tell how much this win helped FSU. Also uncertain is how far FSU may drop in the Baseball America poll (from No. 4) and from the Collegiate Baseball-ESPN poll (from No. 9). But at least the Seminoles have stopped the bleeding.

"If you come down here and got swept, near the end of the season, it

Please see FSU, 5D

would've had a bad effect on us," said FSU coach Mike Martin, who also thought the win kept FSU's chance of hosting seventh consecutive NCAA regional. "The fact that we were able to split the (season) games should weigh heavily on the (selection) committee's minds."

Facing Knowles, who came into this game with a lifetime earned-run average of 31.50 against FSU, helped a bunch. Gone was the heat of Fernandez, replaced by some seemingly weak stuff.

That allowed the Seminoles to get in some serious batting practice, ripping Knowles for five runs off three doubles and a single in the second inning. The fifth run was credited to Knowles after he was replaced by Will Vespe, who gave up one of his own in the inning for FSU's 6-0 lead.

Getting its first big break of this series also helped, when Miami second baseman Jose Trujillo overthrew home trying to nail Buddy Cribb, who was trying to draw Trujillo's attention away from getting Eduardo Perez out on a grounder. That was one of two Miami errors in the inning.

"That was the key to the ball game, Martin said.

It marked the second time this season FSU beat Miami's No. 3 starter.

"That's been our biggest problem," Miami coach Ron Fraser said. "We'll have to do something else. We'll have to go back to the drawing board on that."

Miami only partially got back into the game in the bottom of the second, but couldn't get more than two runs out of a bases-loaded situation. Instead, FSU starter Clyde

Keller (9-0) settled down and provided the first quality start in four games. That was when — guess who — Keller pitched a complete game at Memphis State last Sunday.

He wasn't as effective this time around, leaving in the seventh, but still is one win away from matching last year's team-leading win total of 10 games.

"I was trying to find the umpire's zone," said Keller, now 3-0 lifetime against Miami. "It was throwing in a teacup."

It helped to get what Gar Finn-vold and Brad Gregory didn't get the two previous nights: support. Catcher Pedro Grifol, a Miami Columbus High grad, drove in two runs with his two doubles after going 1-for-7 in the last two games. FSU had five doubles overall.

"I was feeling down (Saturday) night, but when I woke up this morning, I felt pretty good about playing this game," said Grifol, who was booed heavily Miami fans. "I had fun playing the game, which is the biggest thing."

