

Smith provides power; Varnes shuts down 'Canes

By Steve Ellis

DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

Blair Varnes demonstrated to Miami during last season's College World Series that he is courageous. The Florida State sophomore showed the Hurricanes on Friday night he is much more.

The Seminoles took the important first step in the direction of Omaha during this best-of-three NCAA Super Regional. They did it on Varnes' arm and by finally beating Miami nemesis David Gil. Varnes put down 11 Hurricanes in a row, and Chris Smith hit a grand slam as FSU won the super regional opener 9-2.

The win puts FSU one game away from its 18th appearance in



PHIL COALE / Democrat

FSU's Blair Varnes allowed two earned runs in seven innings.

the College World Series after ending Miami's 12-game winning streak in the postseason.

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FSU

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"We played very well as a team," said FSU coach Mike Martin, who secured his 19th 50-win season. "We got to play just as well if not better to achieve our goal. Miami will come out loaded for bear."

Varnes (11-2) was 1-2 in three previous starts against Miami that included six innings on a ruptured ACL in the championship game of the CWS last season. Not including Mike and Javier Rodriguez, Miami (40-18-1) was just 2 of 27 against FSU pitchers. Varnes escaped a bases-loaded, no-out situation in the first with just one run. After that, he was mostly in control.

He retired 14 of 15 batters before giving up an infield single to open the eighth. In what was the game's critical point, freshman reliever Robby Read made Martin look smart with his quick hook of Varnes. Chris Ginn helped put runners on first and second with the tying run at the plate and one out when Read came in and struck out two Hurricanes.

Read, who two-hit Central Florida with a 6-1 win on Sunday to put FSU (50-16) in the super regional, snuffed Miami's threat before 5,374 fans, the most at Dick Howser Stadium this season.

"Confidence was definitely there," Read said. "When the team is hitting the ball like they are, it's so much easier."

FSU followed Read's effort by putting it away in the bottom of the eighth on the grand slam by Smith.

The right fielder collected a season-high six RBIs, and FSU has two chances to get to Omaha.

Jon McDonald (11-4, 3.93 ERA) will face Brian Walker (11-2, 3.00 ERA) at 7 p.m. tonight. If FSU loses, the teams will meet at 1 p.m. Sunday.

"I think it is going to be tough in this ballpark," Miami right fielder Manny Crespo said. "This team has battled back all year. It's going to be tough in this ballpark the way these guys are playing."

Gil (11-3) brought a 3-0 record and a respectable 3.28 ERA against FSU into Howser Stadium. But FSU countered with a rekindled confidence at the plate that had its roots in the last three games of the regional. Gil gave up a season-high 10 hits and six earned runs and hit three batters before being pulled in the eighth.

"I just got beat tonight — simple as that," Gil said. "They came out swinging the bat more aggressively than they usually do."

Miami grabbed its only lead when Javy Rodriguez dropped an RBI-single into left field for a 1-0 lead. FSU needed a bad bounce to tie it in the second, but luck had nothing to do with the way FSU manhandled Gil the remainder of his fifth start against FSU. Ryan Barthelemy was out at home after third base coach Chip Baker sent him on Pichi Balet's single into right field. But a weird bounce in front of home plate allowed FSU to tie it. Baker wasn't as fortunate with a base-running decision two innings later when McCaleb was thrown out easily at home on a John-Ford Griffin and FSU came up empty in the fourth inning.

Florida St. 9, Miami 2

UM	ab	r	h	bi	FSU	ab	r	h	bi
Rodriguez cf	4	2	3	2	Smith rf	5	1	2	6
Howard 3b	4	0	1	0	Griffin lf	4	0	2	0
Rodriguez ss	4	0	3	2	Futrell lf	1	0	0	0
Esquivel 1b	4	0	0	0	McDuff 2b	5	0	1	0
Martinez dh	4	0	0	0	Barthelemy 1b	3	2	1	1
Crespo rf	3	0	0	0	Jernigan cf	3	1	1	0
Brown lf	4	0	1	0	Balet 3b	4	1	2	1
DiRosa c	3	0	0	0	Halliday dh	2	1	1	0
Mannix ph	1	0	0	0	Thigpen pr	0	1	0	0
Clute 2b	3	0	0	0	Groves ss	4	1	1	0
McCaleb c	2	1	2	1					
Totals	34	2	8	2	Totals	33	9	13	9

Miami 101 000 000—2
Florida State 041 000 04x—9
DP—UM 3, FSU 1. LOB—UM 6, FSU 6. 2B—M. Rodriguez, J. Rodriguez, Brown, Smith, Griffin 2. HR—Smith, Barthelemy. SB—J. Rodriguez, Crespo.

UM	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Gil, 11-3	7.1	10	6	6	3	2
Farmer	0.2	3	3	3	0	2
FSU						
Varnes, 11-2	7.0	7	2	2	1	6
Ginn	0.1	1	0	0	0	1
Read	0.2	0	0	0	0	2
Lynch	1.0	0	0	0	0	3

HBP—by Gil (Jernigan); by Gil (McCaleb); by Gil (Halliday). WP—Page; Jarrett; Bacon. T—2:57. A—5,374.