

At last, Seminoles win again

By Gerald Ensley
Democrat staff writer

Finally.

Like flu victims breaking a cold sweat to end a terrible fever, the Florida State men's basketball team stopped a nine-game losing streak Wednesday night by beating Tulane 74-51.

It gave the Seminoles, now 8-12, their first Metro Conference victory of the season (against seven losses, last in the conference), and buried for this season any notion of tying the FSU record for consecutive losses of 13 (set in 1947-48).

Tulane, 11-9 overall and 4-5 in the conference, ended a three-game winning streak.

Shooting an even 50 percent from the floor (reaching that plateau for only the second time in 10 games), making an incredible 21 steals and making only eight turnovers, the Seminoles just flat did everything right Wednesday.

"The big key tonight was that everybody played hard," said FSU head coach Joe Williams. "We've known all along that things would start falling our way eventually. Tonight, they did."

A crowd of 3,315 spectators — "the real fans," said one of them — turned out in the Tallahassee-Leon County Civic Center, and cheered lustily from the beginning despite their rather small number.

"Everybody was saying that the fans were going to boo tonight, or wear sacks over their heads," said FSU senior center Al Gipson. "That would have been OK. I guess if I was a fan watching us this season, I might feel the same way. But there wasn't none of that. I was glad to see that many people come out."

Gipson led all scorers with 18 points. Most notable of those was his 16th point — coming with 7:35 to play in the game — when Gipson scored the 1,000th point of his FSU career. He became the 19th Seminole ever to score 1,000 points, but only he and current NBA player Mitchell Wiggins (1,067 points from 1981-83) managed to reach that mark in two seasons.

The victory — most strange for FSU in this tortured season — was never in doubt. With guard Dean Shaffer hitting two quick jumpers from the outside and Gipson adding two more baskets from up close, the Seminoles jumped to an 8-0 lead, and led by 10 points on two occasions in the first six minutes.

Tulane played the first eight minutes without star center John Williams, who did not start because he missed a practice this week. When he did enter the game, with 12:24 to go in the first half, Tulane made its only run of the game, as Williams scored 10 straight

points for the Green Wave and brought Tulane to within four points (20-16) with 4:57 to play in the first half.

But over the next two minutes, led by a rash of steals, FSU rang off 13 straight points, taking a 35-18 lead with 2:39 to go in the half. Tulane closed the margin to 15 points, 37-22, at halftime, giving FSU its first halftime lead since a fight-marred, one-point loss to Louisville eight games ago.

Tulane closed to within that 15-point margin once in the second half but never got any closer. FSU, playing with subs the last three minutes, twice led by 25 points.

"There was nothing malicious. He (Williams) just had car problems, although that's not a good enough reason to miss practice," Tulane head coach Ned Fowler said of his decision not to start Williams, the Green Wave's leading scorer. "But I don't think that made a bit of difference in the outcome. Florida State got off to a great start. We weren't ready to play, and Florida State wanted it more."

You betcha, bubba.

"We knew we were at the bottom of the league. We had nothing to lose. We knew it was time to win," said Shaffer of FSU's quick start.

"All we're trying to do now is win enough conference games so we won't have to play (first-place) Memphis State in the Metro tournament," said point guard Joe Farrar.

Shaffer, whose 14 points made him one of four Seminoles to score in double figures, was most instrumental in the victory. Coming into the game shooting only 40 percent from the floor (lowest among the starters), Shaffer went to the civic center almost three hours early Wednesday to practice his shooting. Apparently the extra work paid off, as Shaffer connected on seven of nine shots.

More important, though, was the ball-hawking of Shaffer and Farrar. Shaffer made five steals and Farrar a season-high six, each making a steal on Tulane's first two possessions, starting the Green Wave on its way to 15 first-half turnovers (23 for the game).

"Florida State always reaches in and tonight they did an especially good job of that. We did a poor job of protecting the ball," said Fowler. "What was so bad was that FSU only pressed a couple of times. We were turning the ball over in our offense. We just had some very sloppy passes, some poor judgment. It was a total breakdown in fundamentals."

But for FSU, it was pure bliss.

TULANE (51)

	FG	FT	Rb	Asst	S	Min	TP
Eads	3-7	0-1	4	0	0	35	6
Johnson	0-0	0-0	0	1	0	19	0
Aughburns	1-2	0-0	1	0	0	12	2
Dominique	1-4	0-0	1	1	0	27	2
Hamilton	4-11	2-3	8	0	2	35	10
Williams	6-11	2-2	9	0	0	26	14
Beene	2-3	0-1	1	0	0	11	4
Thompson	0-0	0-0	0	2	0	4	0
Irving	0-0	0-0	1	0	0	8	0
Scott	3-6	0-1	3	0	0	12	6
Smith	2-5	3-4	3	0	0	8	7
Frazier	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	3	0
Team			2				
Totals	22-49	7-12	33	4	2	200	51

FLORIDA STATE (74)

	FG	FT	Rb	Asst	S	Min	TP
Allen	6-13	1-2	5	1	5	37	13
Myrick	6-9	2-3	3	4	1	30	14
Gloson	8-17	2-2	6	1	2	36	18
Farrar	3-9	0-0	3	4	6	33	6
Skaffter	7-9	0-0	4	4	5	32	14
Fitchett	2-6	0-0	2	2	1	24	4
Mabry	0-1	0-0	0	1	0	2	0
Speights	1-1	1-1	1	0	0	2	3
Carter	0-1	2-2	1	0	1	2	2
Martin	0-0	0-0	1	0	0	2	0
Team			1				
Totals	33-66	8-10	27	17	21	200	74

Halftime: Florida St. 37, Tulane 22.
Total fouls: Tulane 11, Florida St. 17; Fouled out: none; Techn. fouls: Tulane bench, Allen (FSU); Alt: 3,315.