

Lewis strikes out 13 in 6-4 FSU victory

Believe it or not, Richie Lewis insisted he did not take his best stuff to the mound with him Saturday.

But if you were a Georgia Tech hitter, Florida State catcher Ed Fulton or anyone in the crowd of 3,129 who energized Seminole Stadium, you would not buy Lewis' story. He struck out 13, including the last two hitters representing the tying run at the plate in the ninth inning, to lead FSU past the Yellow Jackets 6-4.

The Seminoles, 8-1, play Tech again today at 2. It was the season opener for the Yellow Jackets, considered a favorite to win the Atlantic Coast Conference this year.

"I didn't have any pop on my fastball until about the seventh inning. I was telling the guys in the dugout that I couldn't get loose. The only thing I had going most of the game was good control with my curve," said Lewis. "Maybe it's because I stayed home last night and got too much sleep. Usually I go out Friday night whether I'm going to pitch or not, but I figured this was a big game."

"That little man has an arm that is unbelievable," said Fulton,

who led an 11-hit attack with two singles and a double. "My finger feels like he was throwing hard."

For Lewis, a sophomore from Muncie, Ind., strikeouts are the thing. As a freshman last year bouncing between starting and short relief, Lewis averaged 10.5 strikeouts per nine innings, one of the top ratios in the country. He has turned the heat up a notch this season. In 16 innings, he has fanned 23.

Can it be long before FSU fans begin posting "K's" for each Lewis strikeout in the Shea Stadium-Dwight Gooden style?

"I hope so," said Lewis, who allowed seven hits and walked only two. "That fires me up. My goal facing every hitter is to strike them out come hell or high water. I live to strike people out."

FSU coach Mike Martin said that strikeout mentality is what got Lewis in trouble in the ninth inning when Tech reached him for a solo homer by Frank Bolick, a double off the Screened Porch in the ninth, and a single to make it 6-4 with Lewis out.

If Carl Sitler's hit had gone over rather than against the new right-field screen, Lewis would have left the game, Martin said.

The FSU coach said Lewis was too concerned with strikeouts in the last inning, causing him to fall behind hitters.

"He has got to realize that late in the game he has lost something, and with a four-run lead in the ninth inning that he has to let the seven people in the field help him," said Martin.

But Martin knows what Lewis proved last May in the Metro Conference Tournament — that he responds to big-game pressure at the end of games. He got Pete Stephens and Billy Parham this time on strikes as the crowd stood and clapped in anticipation.

It was a big-game atmosphere for the first time this season. Georgia Tech took a 1-0 lead on Sitler's second-inning solo homer. The Seminoles tied it in the bottom of the inning on a Fulton double and a Paul Sorrento single. The Seminoles got nothing out of a bases-loaded, no-out situation.

After the Yellow Jackets scratched out a run in the fifth for a 2-1 lead, the Seminoles answered back with three. Deion Sanders ignited it all by drawing a walk. He turned on his speed and the crowd when he ripped around the bases and scored on Jose Marzan's

double.

FSU added two vital runs in the seventh. Alicea started it with a double, and pinch-hitter Tommy Zoeller got a key bases-loaded single. From then on it was Lewis' game.

If you had any doubt whether this game was a matchup featuring considerable talent, all you had to do was scan the stands behind home plate. Many big-league scouts were making notes and pointing radar guns.

"I wish they weren't here for this game," said Lewis. "I hope they come back when I'm throwing better."

