

Alicea's homer lifts FSU

By George Maselli

Democrat staff writer

The calendar has just turned to March and the season is too young to get carried away with flighty words like destiny.

But for the second time in the past week, Florida State came back to win a baseball game it had no business winning. Luis Alicea crashed a three-run home run with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning to lead FSU to an 8-7 victory over South Florida before 2,965 witnesses at Seminole Stadium.

"That was one of the best ball-games we've had here in a long time because of the conditions; we're ranked No. 1 and they're ranked No. 7. And they were throwing their ace," said FSU coach Mike Martin, who along with his team is riding the high tide of the top ranking in the ESPN-Collegiate Baseball poll.

The Seminoles, 13-1, will next travel to Tampa to play a two-game series beginning Tuesday night with South Florida. The Bulls, 11-4, looked to have this one won.

There was trouble from the start for the Seminoles. Doug Little, continuing his early season struggles, was hit for a single, a run-scoring double, another single and a walk before anyone had warmed their seats. But he pitched out of the bases-loaded jam with two strikeouts and an infield out.

"They had a chance to put us away right there," said Martin. "The credit goes to Doug Little."

Frustrated enough after blowing their chance, it must have hurt the Bulls to watch FSU capitalize on its chance in the bottom of the first. With ace starter Mark Rose (son of

South Florida basketball coach Lee Rose) on the mound, this was not expected.

Deion Sanders started by doubling off the screen in right, Jose Marzan walked, Alicea had a bunt single and the bases were loaded. Catcher Ed Fulton then unloaded a grand slam over the screen in right to make it 4-1. Bien Figueroa and Tommy Zoeller followed with singles. Figueroa scored on an infield out by Barry Blackwell, himself a hero later in the game.

Rose did what top pitchers usually do when struggling early — he found a way to pull his game together. He shut out FSU until the ninth, allowing just two bouncing singles and three walks.

On the other side, Little was hit for a two-run homer to right in the fourth by Allen Swabeck. In the fifth, all-America catcher Scott Hemond hit a majestic three-run homer to make it 6-5. The stadium, in laid-back mode after Fulton's early shot, grew tense.

Luckily for FSU, Steve Kovensky, 4-0, worked the last 3½ innings without allowing another run. There was no room for it. Rose, who has beaten Miami twice this season, looked too tough.

But in the ninth, the Seminoles got to him. First of all: "We knew he had thrown 140 pitches going into the ninth inning," said Martin. Meaning? They hoped he was tiring.

There also was confidence on the FSU bench. "When I came in off the field in the ninth inning, we knew that this club is known for coming back," said Fulton. "We've done it three or four times this year. I was thinking somebody was going to do it for us."

It was Blackwell, Marzan and Alicea who did it. Blackwell led off by working the count full and then lining a single to center. Pinch-hitter Craig Saxner popped out. Filling in for Sanders, who had sprained his left ankle, Keith Kidd bounced one down the third-base line. Lou Munoz forced Blackwell at second, but Kidd beat the relay at first as the Bulls rushed from the dugout ready to celebrate.

With two outs, Marzan stepped in. Rarely one to kill a rally, Marzan leaned into a slow curve, in baseball parlance, "taking one for the team." Alicea then worked the count to 2-1 and drove a high fastball over the fence in deep right-center. Seminoles came running out of the dugout. Martin was doing some of the best vertical leaps of his life bounding toward Alicea.

"It was a game in which nobody panicked," said Martin. "We won the ballgame, they didn't lose it."

For Alicea — the most highly regarded player on the field, according to pro scouts — it was his first homer of the year. It helped reverse a tough start this season that had him worrying about defensive inconsistencies (i.e. nine errors). Have scouts' projections of Alicea being a No. 1 draft choice in June been putting on too much pressure?

"I've been making errors, but I know I'm going to get drafted so I'm not going to worry about it," said Alicea, likeable in good times or bad. "I just want to play and have fun."

South Florida					Florida State				
	ab	r	h	bi		ab	r	h	bi
Pike,cf	5	1	2	0	Sanders,cf	4	1	2	0
Rush,ss	4	2	2	1	Kidd,lf	1	1	0	0
Waggoner,dh	5	1	3	0	Marzan,lb	3	2	0	0
S.Hemond,c	3	1	2	4	Alicea,2b	5	2	2	3
W.Hemondlb	3	1	0	0	Fulton,3b	4	1	2	4
Swabek,lf	5	1	1	2	Figueroa,ss	2	1	1	0
Munoz,3b	4	0	0	0	Zoeller,dh	4	0	1	0
Trumball,rf	3	0	1	0	Taddeo,rf	2	0	0	0

Bullard,2b	4	0	0	0	Blackwell,c	4	0	1	1
					Mangham,lfcf	3	0	0	0
					Saxner,ph	1	0	0	0
Totals	36	7	11	7	Totals	34	8	9	8

South Florida	100	231	000—	7
Florida State	500	000	003—	8

E—Rush. DP—none. LOB—USF 8, FSU 5. 2B—Rush, Trumball, Sanders. HR—Swabek (2), S.Hemond (4), Fulton (3), Alicea (1). SB—W.Hemond, Pike, Figueroa. CS—Pike, S.Hemond, Sanders.

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
South Florida						
Rose (L 3-1)	8 ² / ₃	9	8	8	4	6
Florida State						
Little	5 ¹ / ₃	9	7	7	4	6
Kovensky (4-0)	3 ² / ₃	2	0	0	2	4

T—3:00. A—2,965.