

*FSU's John Bentley
didn't know until
Wednesday that he
would be pitching against
Duke.*

By Steve Ellis
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This is one decision coach Mike Martin won't have to second-guess.

Freshman John Bentley saw to that by becoming just the second Florida State pitcher to throw a complete game this season. The former North Florida Christian standout held Duke to five hits as Florida State opened the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament with a 4-2 victory Wednesday.

Martin had agonized prior to the game over his decision to start Bentley rather than ace Randy Choate. The veteran FSU coach wanted to save lefty Choate for a probable second-round game against North Carolina State,

whose top five hitters swing left-handed.

Choate, the only other Seminole with a complete game this season, now gets that 8:30 p.m. start against either the No. 3 seed Wolfpack or Virginia. The two teams played late Wednesday night.

"This is a tremendous shot in the arm for us in tournament play ... to win with a guy you've been using mostly in middle relief," Martin said. "John Bentley pitched exceptional baseball."

Bentley (4-1) mostly breezed through the seventh-seeded Blue Devils' lineup before an FSU partisan crowd of 3,000 at Al Lang Stadium. Although he gave up a homer to Jeff Becker in the sixth, Bentley rarely had runners in scoring position.

Bentley threw 136 pitches. His previous most had been 95 against Mercer.

"I wasn't tired at the end at all," Bentley said. "It felt good to get nine. I knew how important this was."

It was a good ending to a day

that began with Bentley stuck on a hotel elevator for 15 minutes with 22 teammates.

Prior to helping FSU improve its record to 42-14 on Wednesday, Bentley had pitched more than four innings just three times.

It was easily his best effort in 15 appearances this season as he became the first freshman to pitch a complete game since Jonathan Johnson did it three times in 1993.

Martin didn't inform Bentley of his decision to start him until Wednesday morning. The last time Martin gambled by holding his ace, it cost FSU the opener in the 1994 ACC Tournament. Charlie Cruz was the surprise starter instead of Paul Wilson in FSU's 6-5 loss to N.C. State. That sent FSU into the loser's bracket and forced the Seminoles to make the championship game the hard way.

As an assistant coach, Martin talked Woody Woodward into making a similar move against Mar-

Please see FSU-DUKE, 3B

shall in the 1978 NCAA Regional. FSU was upset 4-0.

"All that was really on my mind," Martin said. "It wasn't that I didn't respect John Bentley, but I was concerned what had happened before.

"But we're here to win this and get the No. 1 seed for (the NCAA East Regional) and I felt we really needed to put Randy Choate on the mound against North Carolina State."

Bentley's defensive support was a mixed bag against Duke. The Seminoles made three double plays, the most since hosting Mercer on April 1, but also committed five errors to tie the season high.

Duke used two errors, including one by second baseman Scott Zech, to take a 1-0 lead in the first inning. FSU answered with all the offensive support Bentley needed with three runs on three hits in its half of the first.

"I tried to not let the little errors bother me," Bentley said. "I knew I was pitching pretty well."

The Seminoles added a run in the second inning on the game's most bizarre play. With two outs, Jeremy Morris hit a towering pop fly that landed fair six inches in front of home plate as four Duke players watched it land untouched. Jose Zabala scored from second on the play to give FSU a 4-1 lead.

"I've had a lot of hits," Morris said. "That was the luckiest one I've ever had."

■ FSU's Friday game will be televised at 7:30 p.m. on the Sunshine Network (cable 23), either live or tape delay, depending on whether the Seminoles advance to the 11 a.m., 2:30 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. game.

DUKE (31-24)				FSU (42-15)					
	ab	r	h	bl	ab	r	h	bl	
Schill ss	4	0	0	0	Badeaux ss	3	0	0	0
Chlou 2b	4	1	2	0	Drew cf	2	1	0	0
Becker 3b	4	1	1	1	Morris lf	3	1	2	1
Maluchoik c	4	0	0	1	Sprague 1b	4	1	1	1
Gels cf	5	0	1	0	Salazar c	3	0	0	1
Fletcher rf	4	0	0	0	Zech 2b	3	0	2	1
Conrey dh	4	0	0	0	McCorkel rf	3	0	1	0
Benik 1b	3	0	0	0	Cox dh	1	0	0	0
Goodroe lf	4	0	1	0	Mayfield ph	2	0	0	0
Conner p	0	0	0	0	Zabala 3b	2	1	0	0
Dupree p	0	0	0	0	Bentley p				

Totals	34	2	5	2	Totals	26	4	6	4
Duke					100	001	000	—3	
FSU					310	000	00x	—4	

E—Goodroe, Badeaux 2, Zech 2, Zabala.
 DP—Duke 2, FSU 3. LOB—Duke 7, FSU 8. 2B—
 Zech (9). HR—Becker (12). CS—Morris. Sac—
 McCorkel.

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Duke						
Conner, L (5-7)	1½	3	4	3	2	0
Dupree	6½	3	0	0	7	4

FSU
 Bentley, W (4-1) 9 5 2 2 4
 WP—Dupree, Bentley. U—Erby, Kramer,
 Manders, Maners. T—2:25.