

# FSU weathers through

*Randy Niles gets even against the team that beat him on Saturday.*

**By Steve Ellis**  
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Florida State was holding on to a precarious two-run lead when Randy Niles found himself in a familiar situation on Sunday.

It had been just 30 hours since he gave up a game-deciding homer to Auburn's David Ross. Now Josh Etheredge had stepped up to the plate with the bases loaded and with two outs.

"It felt like *deja vu*," Niles said.

Not quite.

Niles struck out Etheredge — who fouled off four two-strike pitches — to secure a 9-7 victory for the No. 2 seed Seminoles.

That made the four-hour rain delay well worth it for most of the 4,732 in attendance at Dick Howser Stadium. It also set up a winner-takes-all championship game late Sunday night between the top two seeds.

At stake for FSU was a fourth consecutive trip and 15th overall to the College World Series. The CWS begins this weekend.

Niles picked up his first save of the regional after winning two earlier games. His only blemish came in an 8-7 loss on Saturday when Auburn catcher Ross — a Florida High graduate — beat him and FSU with a ninth-inning homer over left field.

"I give all the credit to my teammates and my coaches for having the confidence in me," Niles said. "I came back after a disappointing loss yesterday."

Ross had a chance to play hero again when he faced FSU starter Chris Chavez in the seventh inning. But it was another catcher, FSU's Jeremy Salazar, who set up one final showdown between the Seminoles and Auburn.

The Seminoles were trailing 4-2 in the fifth inning when Salazar hit a three-run homer. It was the game's key hit as FSU secured its fourth consecutive 50-win season. FSU has failed to win 50 games only twice in the 18 years of the Mike Martin Era.

Salazar's homer over the right-field screen was the key part of a five-run fifth inning in which FSU finally made good on a threat and took a 7-4 lead. The Seminoles

stranded 12 runners in the game.

Auburn also had its chances in leaving 16 runners on base, including eight stranded in the final three innings.

Ross came to the plate in the seventh inning with Auburn trailing 7-4. The bases were loaded when he hit an RBI single to right field that should have done more

damage. But Auburn's Derek Reif was held at third by Tiger coaches when Terry Henderson struggled to pick up the ball. Auburn then hit into a double play to end the threat.

From there Auburn added solo runs in the eighth and ninth inning as Niles held the Tigers to one run on four hits in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  innings.

FSU put the game away in the eighth inning with two runs, including a sacrifice fly by Salazar. The Seminoles produced 13 hits but just two for extra bases against two Auburn pitchers. Brent Schoening (5-3) was the loser after pitching well in the first three innings. He gave

up five runs on seven hits in 4 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings.

Schoening picked up early offensive help as Auburn opened a run in the first and scored two runs in the second. Auburn scored in the fifth when FSU shortstop Brooks Badeaux conceded a run. The junior had a good chance to get Tim Hudson out at home plate but went for the easy out at first after fielding a hard-hit grounder.

That mistake didn't prove costly as FSU as produced offensively after that.

The last time the Seminoles had

to win two games on the final day was in 1992 when they beat Western Carolina to advance to the College World Series.

Auburn (46-15)			FSU (56-14)		
ab	r	h	ab	r	h
Sullivan rf	3	3	2	1	1
Macrory 3b	4	0	4	2	0
Kersh lb	5	0	1	0	0
Hudson cf	5	1	3	1	0
Etheredge if	3	1	1	1	0
Rail dh	3	1	0	1	0
Wardell 3b	4	0	0	0	0
Ross c	5	1	2	1	0
Kelly c	5	0	0	0	0
Schoening p	0	0	0	0	0
Hancock p	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	39	7	13	4	1

Auburn	120	616	111—7
FSU	99	250	82—4

E—Soregut, (20). Zabala (23). DP—FSU 3.  
LOB—Auburn 14, FSU 12. \*2B—Etheredge.  
(14). Macrory (23). Zech 2(13). HR—Salazar  
(7). SF—Salazar (8).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Auburn						
Schoening L 5-3	4 $\frac{2}{3}$	7	5	5	5	3
Hancock	3 $\frac{1}{3}$	4	4	4	4	2
FSU						
Chavez, W 4-1	7 $\frac{1}{3}$	9	6	5	5	3
Niles	1 $\frac{2}{3}$	4	1	1	1	2

WP—Hancock 3. PB—Ross. BK—Schoening.  
HBP—by Chavez (Rail), by Chavez, (Kersh),  
by Niles (Etheredge). U—Perez, Runchey,  
Sylvester, Norman. T—3:14. A—4,068.