

At the midway point, an A for effort

After a rough start, the surging FSU baseball team gets good midterm grades from coach Mike Martin.

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Two months ago the Florida Atlantic series would have been viewed as a crucial one for Florida State baseball.

This would be one that FSU, fighting for all the wins it could get

to make the NCAA Regionals, must sweep.

Instead, FSU's second win over Florida Atlantic, a 7-5 escape on Wednesday, was just another of many wins for FSU as it moved into the second half of the season.

Even coach Mike Martin, the eternal optimist, is surprised by what FSU (26-7) accomplished by the midway point. His Seminoles are atop the ACC with a 7-0 mark and are riding a 15-game winning streak.

FSU is playing well in all areas. The Seminoles on Wednesday picked up nine hits, including a tri-

ple from the rebounding Brooks Badeaux, and Jeremy Salazar's eighth homer of the season. Starting pitcher John Bentley allowed just three hits before running into trouble in the sixth inning when he gave up three runs on four hits.

The Seminoles host Maryland today at 6 p.m. to begin a three-game series.

Martin gives his team an "A" for overall effort at midterm. FSU wasn't even ranked in *Baseball America's* top 25 after the first week and is ranked 15th by that publication now. FSU is ranked as high as No. 8 in other polls after

going 12-5 against ranked teams.

"We're playing good baseball right now," Martin said.

Fielding was an immediate concern for Martin after an error-plagued start at the season-opening ACC Baseball Blast in Orlando. Martin moved long-time shortstop Badeaux to second base and Jose Zabala, who struggled at second, to third.

Badeaux's diving stop in the fifth inning Wednesday has been typical of his play and Zabala has been solid. Brett Groves, who made

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several impressive defensive plays on Wednesday, became the starting shortstop. His 16-game hitting streak was snapped on Wednesday.

Martin grades fielding a B+.

"I'm not talking individually but overall," Martin said. "A couple of infielders might be a B. It keeps getting better."

FSU's starting rotation was crucial if FSU was to keep alive its 20-year streak of making an NCAA Regional. Martin had to replace starters Randy Choate, Randy Niles and Chuck Howell. The trio combined for 29 wins last season.

This season, Chris Chavez has been erratic since throwing a no-hitter. But Martin gives the five-man rotation a B-.

He did the same for middle relief. Zach Diaz has earned three wins in relief. Wes Crawford (4-0, 3.26 ERA) is the only pitcher who began the season in the three-man weekend starting rotation and remains in it.

"We haven't really pitched that great in the middle," Martin said. "Diaz has done OK but really had just one bad outing."

Short relievers get an A-. Scott Proctor had gone 12 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings without a hit before giving up one on Sunday.

"Proctor's been very impressive and he has been playing the role of closer more than anybody," Martin said. "We've got good effort out of our short relievers."

The loss of sluggers J.D. Drew and Jeremy Morris and a slew of recruits who opted for professional baseball is well documented. FSU

is also without Shawn McCorkel. And until the FAU series, Badeaux had struggled at the plate.

Yet, FSU's hitting has been very good. Salazar leads FSU with a .395 batting average and 42 RBIs. Matt Diaz is on a 12-game hitting streak and is tied with Salazar as the home run leader.

"Hitting right now is a B+," Martin said. "I'm very pleased. Home runs are not a big deal to me. Good at-bats are and we've had very good at-bats and cut down on strikeouts."

Martin reserves his best grade, an A+, for team character and attitude.

"The character of this team is as good as any as I've had," Martin said. "That's one of the reasons we've had the kind of season we've had so far."

"This team has come together quicker than I anticipated. It goes back to being together for that long road trip to start the season. Definitely, a surprise."

FAU (23-12)					FSU (26-7)				
	ab	r	h	bi		ab	r	h	bi
Roig 2b	5	0	1	0	Badeaux 2b	4	2	2	0
Bou 3b	5	1	2	0	Zabala 3b	3	2	2	0
Messner dh	4	1	2	0	M. Diaz rf	2	1	1	2
Doudt c	5	0	2	1	Salazar c	4	2	2	1
Celli rf	5	0	0	0	Cox cf	4	0	2	3
Dodge cf	4	1	1	1	Jernigan lf	3	0	0	0
Blair lf	4	0	1	1	Cash dh	3	0	0	0
Raffo 1b	1	2	1	1	Henderson ph	1	0	0	0
Hart ss	4	0	1	1	Woodward 1b	2	0	0	0
Cali p	0	0	0	0	Groves ss	3	0	0	0
Burton p	0	0	0	0	Bentley p	0	0	0	0
					Z. Diaz p	0	0	0	0
					DiBlasi p	0	0	0	0
					Proctor p	0	0	0	0
Totals	37	5	11	5	Totals	29	7	9	4

FAU 001 003 010-5
FSU 302 010 01x-7

E—Blair, Bou, Raffo, Z. Diaz. DP—FAU 3, FSU 1. LOB—FAU 9, FSU 3. 2B—Bou, Dodge, Hart, Messner, Cox. 3B—Badeaux. HR—Raffo Salazar (8). SB—Jernigan. SF—M. Diaz, 2.

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
FAU						
Cali	6	6	6	5	3	2
Burton	2	3	1	1	0	1
FSU						
Bentley	6	7	4	4	1	2
Z. Diaz	$\frac{2}{3}$	3	1	1	0	0
DiBlasi	$\frac{2}{3}$	1	0	0	0	1
Proctor	$\frac{2}{3}$	0	0	0	0	1

W—Bentley 4-0, L—Cali 3-1. Save—Proctor (3). WP—Cali. PB—Doudt. BK—Cali. HBP—by Bentley (Raffo), by Bentley (Raffo), by Z. Diaz (Raffo). U—Larca, Davis. A—1,251.