

Cox puts hurting on Deacons

While Brian Cox struggles with back problems, he continues to produce big plays at the plate.

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The 15-game hitting streak and a quick swing belie the aching truth.

Brian Cox has been battling a bad back that's so sore it would force lesser players to be spectators.

TODAY'S GAME

■ FSU vs. North Carolina, 7:30 p.m. Radio: WNLS (1270 AM).

But try convincing Wake Forest, the latest victim of Cox and Florida State, that the senior center fielder is not at his best. Cox produced three hits and two RBIs to help FSU ease into the quarterfinals of the Atlantic Coast Conference baseball tournament with a 14-1 whipping of No. 5 seed Wake Forest on Thursday.

FSU (47-16) has won 16 of its last 19 ACC Tournament games. If

it wins tonight against North Carolina, it will advance to its fifth consecutive championship game. The 14 runs scored by top-seeded FSU were the second-most for the team in 35 ACC Tournament games. FSU defeated Wake Forest 18-3 in the 1995 tournament.

North Carolina beat Duke 3-1, while Clemson lost to Georgia Tech and N.C. State beat Virginia.

"This is the way we need to be playing in the postseason," catcher Jeremy Salazar said. "We're playing really good defense right now. We're getting the double plays to

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get out of innings.

"Our pitchers are doing a good job of getting grounders and we're hitting the ball pretty good."

FSU will start Jon McDonald (9-3, 3.46 ERA) in tonight's 7:30 game. A repeat of Wes Crawford's effort against Wake Forest (37-20) would do FSU just fine. Crawford (8-3) gave up six hits and walked none in seven innings.

Cox has scored a run in 17 of FSU's last 18 games and is 23 of 38 in his past eight games. His three hits included an RBI double that was part of a seven-run, five-hit attack in the seventh inning. Cox has collected 23 doubles this season to tie Jody Reed for ninth place on the FSU single-season record. He needs just three more doubles to place among the top three.

Salazar, hitting well since missing three games with a strained hamstring, also added two hits as part of FSU's 12-hit barrage.

"These guys (Salazar and Cox) have done a lot of offensive damage for us all year," FSU head coach Mike Martin said, "and it's nice to see them continuing their leadership role in a tournament."

"You won't get (Cox) out the lineup. As long as he can walk, he wants to be out there."

Cox hasn't missed a game this season, and with the NCAA Tournament up next, it's not even the slightest consideration.

"I'll wake up some mornings and it's killing me," Cox said of his back. "But at this time of year,

you've got to fight through this kind of thing. There's no way it's going to keep me from playing. When I get up there (to the plate), it's the last thing on my mind."

FSU wasn't just about hitting or taking advantage of Wake Forest's five errors on Thursday. Crawford's seven-inning effort, coupled with Chris Chavez' complete game the night before, has allowed FSU to keep relief such as Mike DiBlasi fresh for the final games.

Chris Ginn and Zach Diaz combined to allow just one hit in two innings to seal FSU's fourth win over Wake Forest this season.

FSU (46-16)					WPU (37-21)				
	ab	r	h	bi		ab	r	h	bi
Badeaux 2b	4	1	1	1	Daeley cf	3	1	2	1
Zabala 3b	4	2	2	1	Danosky rf	4	0	0	0
Cox rf	6	3	2	2	Palmieri lb	4	0	2	0
Salazar c	5	2	3	2	Rikard if	4	0	1	0
Kelly pr	0	0	0	0	Borrell dh	3	0	0	0
Klosterman c	1	0	0	0	Mendez ph	1	0	0	0
Henderson dh	2	1	0	0	Riepe c	3	0	0	0
Mayfield ph	0	0	0	0	Aquilante ph	1	0	0	0
Diaz M. rf	4	1	1	0	Siemon 3b	3	0	0	0
McCorkel ph	2	0	0	0	Turner ph	1	0	0	0
Cash lb	3	1	1	2	Chiou 2b	4	0	1	0
Woodward lb	0	1	0	0	Voshell ss	1	0	0	0
Jernigan if	3	1	1	2	Brackley ph	1	0	0	0
Otero if	1	0	0	0	Otto ss	1	0	1	0
Groves ss	4	1	0	0	MacDougal p	2	0	0	0
Crawford p	0	0	0	0	Princi p	0	0	0	0
Ginn p	0	0	0	0	Schilling p	0	0	0	0
Diaz Z. p	0	0	0	0	Briggs p	0	0	0	0
Totals	39	14	12	11	Totals	34	1	7	1

FSU 283 100 718-14
WPU 600 001 600-1

E—Zabala (17), Groves (18), Palmieri (1), Siemon (9), Chiou (9), Voshell (16), MacDougal (2). DP—FSU 2, WPU 3. LOB—FSU 10, WPU 7. 2B—Badeaux (11), Cox (23), Salazar (17). HR—Daeley (4). SB—Jernigan (8). SF—Zabala (3).

	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
FSU						
Crawford W (8-3)	7	6	1	1	0	4
Ginn	1	1	0	0	1	0
Diaz Z.	1	0	0	0	0	2

WPU						
MacDougal L. (6-5)	6	9	11	6	5	5
Princi	1/2	2	2	2	1	1
Schilling	1 1/2	1	1	1	3	2
Briggs	1	0	0	0	1	0

WP—MacDougal 3(17), Princi 2(5). PB—Riepe 2(12). HBP—by MacDougal (Cash). U—Kramer, Fuqua, Davis. Erby. T—2:50.