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## FSU slugs its way past Heels

Florida State pounds out 22 hits and will play in the ACC Tournament championship game.

> By Steve Ellis Democrat start writer BURHAM, H.C.

Florida State came dangerously close to being beaten twice Friday night — once by itself and once by North Carolina.

But sixth-seeded UNC finally got into the spirit of things by selfdestructing in the 10th inning. Two fielding blunders allowed No. 1 seed FSU to escape with a 13-11 win and secure a spot in the ACC Championship game. Tar Heel center fielder Jarrett Shearin, who FSU coach Mike Martin previously voted as an All-ACC outfielder, overran Jeremy Salazar's one-out single into center field. That allowed Jose Zabala to break an 11-11 deadlock and score the winning run in the top of the 10th. UNC left fielder Richie Grimsley followed that with another error as FSU added the final run.

"One of the real gutsy performances I can remember in the last 19 years by us," Martin said. "To see our guys in this kind of situation, I'm elated. We were down and kept our composure and got some great pitching out of (Mike DiBlasi)."

After rolling through the first two rounds, the Seminoles' (48-17) pitching and fielding mostly failed them in the third. The hitting did not, as FSU produced a season-high 22 hits, including six in a crucial, game-tying seventh inning. The Seminoles also picked up a superb relief effort from DiBlasi (2-1), who allowed no hits in the final three innings.

The win guarantees FSU a spot in the tournament championship game either tonight or Sunday afternoon. FSU must first play North Carolina State at 11 e.m today. John Bentley (6-1) will be FSU's starting pitcher.

If the Seminoles win that game, this afternoon's UNC/Wake Forest winner would face FSU tonight at 8. A win by FSU in that game would give the Seminoles their third tournament championship in four years. A Seminole loss would force a Sunday afternoon game to determine the championship. In the other scenario, one in which FSU loses this morning to No. 4 seed N.C. State, the Seminoles would play a winner-take-all championship game Sunday against either Wake Forest or UNC.

Salazar's 15th homer of the year, a two-run shot in the seventh, helped FSU rally from an 11-7 deficit created by the Seminoles' generosity. Ten walks, including four by starter Jon McDonald (9-4), and two costly errors by shortstop Brett Groves, nearly put FSU in a mustwin situation for the remainder of the tournament.

Matt Diaz, he of ever-changing hair color, ripped a two-RBI double in the first to help FSU take a short-lived 30 lead. Short-lived be cause Grimsley followed in UNC's half of the first with a three-run double.

Diaz, who dyed his dark brown hair to blond last week and then back to brown on Friday, was a big part of another impressive FSU offensive display with a season-high five hits.

"I felt a need to perform well after Brooks (Badeaux) told me I wouldn't be able to hit after changing the color of my hair," Diaz said. "Coach Martin told us before the sixth inning to remember what we have written on our chest. We're Seminoles and we battle back."

Friday's display should have been more than enough, and for a brief moment it was. FSU scored four runs in the third to break the 3-3 tie, as Brian Cox's 13th homer and an RBI triple by Kevin Cash keyed the rally.

But then FSU's pitching unraveled. McDonald gave up a careerhigh seven earned runs in 31/2 innings, while relievers Chris Ginn and Scott Proctor gave up six runs on one hit, five walks, a hit batsman and an error.

North Carolina had just six hits.

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