

## Lady Gators topple FSU for softball title

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Downpours, puddles, the losers' bracket and Delta State posed no problems for the Florida State softball team Saturday.

But the University of Florida ... that was another problem as the Lady Gators downed FSU 9-1 in the final of the Region 1 AIAW tournament at Messer Field. The win marked the second straight year Florida has walked away with the trophy, and earned the Lady Gators a measure of revenge after FSU had beaten them in the state finals.

FSU came out of the losers' bracket Saturday morning with 6-1 win over Delta State, the second win over that team in two days. Saturday's opener was played in two parts, with a long fourth-inning stretch during heavy showers, but FSU scored on both sides of the break to earn the shot at Florida.

The Lady Seminoles would have had to beat Florida twice to win the double-elimination tournament, but Florida took care of things in the first game, unleashing a characteristic 16-hit attack to drown FSU.

"Their hitting was the difference this week," FSU coach Jo Graf said of the Lady Gators, who finish the season 44-12. There are no national play-offs.

"On defense we are pretty equal. The only time they weren't hitting was in the state tournament. ... This was a different week and a different time."

FSU's defense was spectacular at times but suspect at others. The Lady Seminoles seemed able to make the toughest of plays and muff the easiest.

For example:

✓ Florida took a 2-0 first-inning lead, helped by a Linda Tyrell error at shortstop, but Tyrell finished the Gator's half of the inning by starting a slick double play.

✓ An outfield error in the third inning put an extra runner on base to set the stage for Florida pitcher Hazel Fuller's three-run homer, which gave Florida a 5-1 lead.

✓ Two bad judgement errors by FSU fielders holding the ball let runs score in the fifth inning as Florida stretched its lead to 8-1.

✓ FSU then got out of a bases-loaded jam with a sixth-inning pitcher-to-catcher-to-third double play and turned a seventh-inning double play on a line drive snagged by Tyrell.

In any case, the defense couldn't have made up for the FSU bats, silent in comparison with Florida's. The Lady Seminoles scored their only run in the first inning, when shortfielder Mary Schuehler tripled and came in on a single by Kathy Norton.

FSU threatened again in the second, loading the bases, but Fuller stayed out of further trouble until the game was out of reach.

"We were coming under the ball," Graf said, explaining the countless popups and fly outs. "We don't have any power hitting this year. (Fuller) was just putting a nice arc on the ball and we were coming under it."

FSU pitcher Stacy Saunier, one of three freshmen in the infield, had pitched a fine game against Delta State, but Florida got her number in the fifth inning. With two outs, Florida belted four straight singles and scored three runs before Colleen Buckley was brought in to pitch.

Buckley gave up a quick single, but got out of the inning and allowed only one run the rest of the way.

Against Delta State, the big hit for FSU was a fourth-inning two-run homer by Rose Trezza. Trezza's home run swing came on the last pitch before the rain came in earnest and gave FSU all the runs it needed.

Florida State, which finishes the season at 26-15, loses only four senior starters off this team. They are first baseman Buckley, shortfielder Schuehler, rightfielder Trezza and catcher Sue Spanegal. Graf, who is finishing only her first season at FSU, said the Lady Seminoles have good young players returning. She is also looking forward to a good crop of recruits, some of whom will be on the FSU campus for tryouts May 20 and 26.