

Seminoles nine gets fast start

By BOB BLANKENSHIP

Executive sports editor

MEMPHIS — Florida State moved into an enviable position in the Metro Conference baseball tournament here Friday, knocking off No. 1 seeded Tulane and Louisville to move within a possible two victories of the league title.

Doing it with pitching, hitting and defense, the Seminoles swept past Tulane 12-4 and Louisville 5-2 on a warm, sunny day and left little to be desired in their quest for a bid to the NCAA championships.

They were to play Memphis State, also the winner of two Friday games, today at 3 p.m. with the winner advancing into Sunday's championship game and the loser faced with the task of having to win a late Saturday game and two on Sunday before nailing down a berth.

Memphis State stayed in the winner's bracket with a 5-0 victory over Cincinnati and a 9-2 victory over Georgia Tech, who had bumped off St. Louis 3-2 in a first-round game.

St. Louis and Cincinnati played a late Friday night elimination game.

The Seminoles, out-hit 10-8 by Tulane, made the most of five Green Wave errors to hike their record to 35-12 after Larry Jones went the route with a four-hitter against Louisville in the day's first game.

The Seminoles committed narry and error behind Jones and only two — long after the verdict had been rendered — against Tulane.

Afterwards, Coach Woody Woodward declared, "We're in great shape."

The Seminole pitching, which was a little suspect coming into the tournament, stood up surprisingly well in the doubleheader with Mike Bretz picking up the easy victory against Tulane, improving his record to 7-3, while working the first six innings. Mark Gilbert finished up.

Jones, now 9-3, was at perhaps his best in a long time in the opener against Louisville, overcoming one shaky inning to retire nine straight over one stretch and allowing only three base runners over the final seven innings.

"I really felt good about it," he said afterwards. "Now if Bretz can go the distance and win, we're going to take a lot of pressure off our pitching staff."

As it turned out, Bretz didn't need to go the distance, riding a 12-0 lead after six FSU turns at bat. Coach Woodward substituted freely over the last three innings.

Woodward said he'd start Jackie Smith in today's game against Memphis and save Mike McLeod for Sunday's championship game or tomorrow's second game if FSU should lose to Memphis.

Woodward, as much as anyone, was impressed with the way the Seminoles played in the doubleheader.

"Yes, I'll say," he said. "This is just great the way we played today. We seemed to do the right thing at the right time, our defense was good, our hitting was good and our pitching was good. We got it all together. We took advantage of everything that came our way and that's what you've got to do."

In the second game against Tulane, which came into the tournament with a 28-8 record, the Green Wave muffed leadoff man Chip Bifano's routine ground ball and he wound up scoring without the aid of a Seminole hit.

The tone of the game was set right there. The Seminoles didn't get their first hit until the third inning and they were ahead 4-0 by then. They had only

seven hits when they led 12-0 — but they included a three-run double by Joe Hicks and a two-run homer by Rick McGlone.

Meanwhile, Bretz was scattering

Tulane, coming alive with the bat in the final three innings against Gilbert, nonetheless managed to score only once off the seldom-used right-fielder in a game that never really had much drama.

"Their pitcher kept them in the game," noted Woodward. "Because of him we had a tougher time than I had expected from Louisville." Kennedy, who ripped four sharp singles, and Hicks, who had two more, were the only Seminoles to really solve his righthanded slants.

"That was the difference out there today," said Jones in citing the Seminole defense. "No errors and my job is a lot easier."

"I knew after that," explained Jones, "that he (umpire) wasn't going to call any low strikes, so I changed the grip on the ball — to get a little more action — and threw it into the letters. That's dangerous, but I was humming pretty good today."

More of the same kind of pitching and the Seminoles could pull off a surprise here and win the NCAA tournament at-large berth that's expected to go to the Metro champion.

E — Melito, Ba. Butera 2, Mobley, Stokes 2, Schimchak. LOB — Florida State 6, Tulane 13. 2B — Hicks, McArdle, Foto. HR — McGlone. SB — Lezzano 2, Hicks, Bifano, Cabeceiras. SF — Benda, Hicks.

PB - Maher, Kennedy, McGlone. T -
3:30.

E—Goff, Webb. DP—FSU 1, Louisville 1. LOB—Louisville 6, FSU 6. 2B—Coulter, Conflenti. SB—Kennedy 2, Hicks, Bifano.

WP-Shields, T-2:14, A-100.