

JU rallies to overcome FSU

Sports writer

With the Sun Belt Conference baseball tournament a week away, Jacksonville University's pitching and defense held a summit last night at Brest Field and, finally, decided to work together.

For JU, the result was a 5-2 victory against Florida State, ranked 18th in the Collegiate Baseball-ESPN poll and 17th by Baseball America. It was JU's fifth consecutive victory and a sign that maybe, just maybe, it is becoming the team coach Tom Bradley thought it would be at season's outset.

"I think our confidence level has got to be up because we've played some good people," said Bradley, whose Dolphins (33-21) had gone 19-17 in their past 36 games before last night. "And, I guess you have to understand that they [the Seminoles] won two big games against Miami [last weekend], and they might have been a little down."

That seemed evident in JU's half of the third inning, when three FSU errors led to four Dolphin runs and a 4-2 JU lead.

"JU deserved to win the game, no question about it," FSU coach Mike Martin said. "They outplayed us tonight, and we made the mistakes in that inning that cost us the ballgame."

Trailing 2-0 after Seminole third baseman Clyde Keller's two-run home run in the first inning, the Dolphins took advantage of what had been plaguing them: errors.

After JU's Jesus Rivera led off the third with a single, Eric Whitford advanced on a rare catcher's interference call on FSU's Barry Blackwell. JU's Sonny Christopher then grounded to second, but second baseman Edwin Alicea's flip to second was dropped by shortstop Donny Erickson, leaving the bases loaded.

JU's Jose Rodriguez then tripled home all three

to give the Dolphins a 3-2 lead. One out later, Bobby Andrews' bouncer to Erickson was bobbled, and Rodriguez scored from third to make it 4-2.

The Dolphins threatened again in the sixth against FSU starter Rod Byerly (4-3), who scattered 11 hits over 7½ innings' work and suffered the loss, but nothing materialized.

Meanwhile, **JOE** was cruising behind starter **JOE SHAPIRO** (5-4), who allowed only three hits after Keller's home run. That is, until the seventh.

FSU opened the inning with consecutive singles by Buddy Cribb and Brad Parker, then Erickson advanced the runners with a sacrifice. Shapiro walked Dean Harrison and was lifted for submarine-style pitcher Brian Evans, whose 0.65 earned run average ranks fifth nationally.

Evans, as has been standard procedure, got Marc Ronan, who had singled twice in two at-bats, to ground into a double play to end the threat.

For FSU, the loss merely seems a temporary detour on the road to the NCAA tournament. Their ranking alone seems good enough to place the Seminoles (40-16-1) there, regardless of their performance in the Metro Conference tournament, which opens a week from today.

"But the way we played tonight," Martin said, "we don't deserve to be ranked any higher. In this game, you have to be consistent."

JU 5, Florida State 2

| Florida State | | | | | JU | | | | |
|---------------|----|---|---|----|-----------|----|---|----|----|
| | ab | r | h | bi | | ab | r | h | bi |
| Alicea 2b | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | Chrstr lf | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Keller 3b | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | Rdgrz rf | 4 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Bickwll c | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Carr 3b | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Grdano lf | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | McGee c | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cribb dh | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | Andrws cf | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Clybrn pr | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Sottle 1b | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Parker 1b | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | Nrvile dh | 4 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Ercksn ss | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Rivera 2b | 4 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Hrrsn rf | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Whtrfd ss | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Ronan cf | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 | | | | | |
| Totals | 32 | 2 | 7 | 2 | Totals | 34 | 5 | 11 | 4 |

| | | | |
|---------------|-----|-----|-------|
| Florida State | 200 | 000 | 000-2 |
| JU | 004 | 000 | 01x-5 |

E-Blackwell, Erickson 2. DP-JU 2. LOB-Florida State 7, JU 7. 2BH-Rivera, Alicea. 3BH-Rodriguez, Sottile. HR-Keller (4). S-Erickson, Blackwell.

| | IP | H | R | ER | BB | SO |
|--------------------------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|
| Florida State | | | | | | |
| Bryer (L 4-3) | 7½ | 11 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Kimball | ½ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| JU | | | | | | |
| Shapiro (W 5-4) | 6½ | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Evans (S 4) | 2½ | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| HBP-- Keller (by Evans) | | | | | | |
| T-2:25. A-500. | | | | | | |

Jacksonville wins on FSU's bobbles

Special to the Democrat

JACKSONVILLE — Jacksonville took advantage of three key Florida State third-inning errors, beating the Seminoles 5-2 Tuesday night.

"We had our chances," said head coach Mike Martin. "They had one big inning and beat us because of it. We did not play well and didn't deserve to win."

Florida State, 40-16-1, got on the board quickly in the first, scoring two runs off starter Joel Shapiro. Edwin Alicea led off with his 60th walk of the season, and Clyde Keller extended his hitting streak to nine games when he hit his fourth homer of the season.

Jacksonville got to Rod Byerly in the third after the Seminole defense caved in. Second baseman Jesus Rivera led off with a single to center. Byerly then got shortstop Eric Whitford to fly to center, but Barry Blackwell was called for catcher's interference, putting runners on first and second with none out. Sonny Christopher hit a bouncer to Alicea for a possible double play, but his flip was dropped by shortstop Donny Erickson, and the

bases were loaded.

Jose Rodriguez then hit a slicing drive to right that eluded Dean Harrison. By the time Harrison chased the ball to the wall, three Dolphins had scored and Rodriguez had a triple. After a walk and a popout, Erickson botched Bobby Andrews' slow roller, scoring Rodriguez from third. Byerly then retired the next two batters but the Dolphins had a 4-2 lead.

In the fourth, leadoff hitter Rivera dumped a shot in front of Harrison in right, but as Harrison charged to field the hop, it bounced sharply away and rolled to the warning track for an apparent triple. But Martin noticed that Rivera had missed second base and on appeal, Rivera was out. Byerly settled down, striking out the next two batters to retire the side.

Meanwhile, Shapiro settled down after Keller's homer, retiring 17 of the next 19 Seminoles.

FSU did threaten in the third. Marc Ronan led off with a single into center and after Alicea flew out, Keller executed a hit and run, placing a single through the hole

Please see FSU, 4C

FSU

From 1C

on the right side as Ronan moved to third. But Shapiro got catcher Blackwell to ground into a double play and hold the score at 2-0.

FSU chased Shapiro in the seventh, but came up empty anyway after reliever Brian Evans got the Seminoles on another double play. Evans continued to pitch tough in the eighth and ninth. After giving

up a double to Alicea to open the eighth, he walked Keller. A perfectly executed Blackwell bunt moved the runners up, but Marc Giordano popped up. Buddy Cribb walked to load the bases, but Evans got Parker on four pitches to retire the side.

Evans struck out Erickson and Harrison in the ninth and following a Ronan single, Alicea flied to center.

The hard-luck Byerly (4-3) turned in his second worthy performance of the road trip. Although

he tired in the eighth, giving up a run on four hits, he had pitched well after the third inning. Byerly also lost to Florida International 2-1 last Wednesday.

Jacksonville's Rivera helped his club with a 4-for-4 performance — including three singles and a double. Ronan was 3-for-4 for FSU while Keller went 2-for-3.

Jacksonville, winning its fifth in a row, improved to 33-21, and Shapiro won his fifth in nine decisions; Evans picked up his fourth save.