

*The Florida State
Seminoles take a little
time to reflect on their
loss to Auburn in the
NCAA Regional finals,
then look toward next
season.*

By Steve Ellis

DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

Chuck Howell was oblivious to the orange and blue celebration that poured onto the field at Dick Howser Stadium.

It had been four years since a senior like Howell had lost a regional. Coach Mike Martin took one glance at his pitcher and knew he was not handling the moment well. Martin slipped a comforting arm around Howell's shoulder.

"He was sitting there in a daze with a stone face like, 'Where do I go from here?'" Martin said. "It's a real lost feeling when they realize they will not be playing college baseball again.

"I just told him that this is one stage that's over and you must move into the next stage of your life."

An important stage was also over for Martin and Florida State baseball. The J.D. Drew and Jeremy Morris era had prematurely ended late Sunday in the NCAA East Regional.

Auburn pitcher Tim Hudson almost single-handedly saw to that in leading the Tigers to a 5-2 victory in the championship game. FSU, which won Sunday's first game over Auburn, would not be going to the College World Series for the first time in four years and just the second time in the 90s.

"It's pretty tough," Drew said.

FSU never believed it would end like this. The Seminoles didn't think so when they lost to Auburn on Saturday or after Hudson shut them down without a run in the first five innings on Sunday. They still had a chance to win in the ninth inning.

"When we lost that emotional game on Saturday morning and won Saturday night, I knew we were going to win two games on Sunday," Martin said. "What I failed to realize was how good Tim Hudson was.

"He's the best pitcher that pitched against us all year. And second, they were the best hitting team we faced all year."

In the early hours of Monday morning, Martin did not talk like a coach whose team had come up short. Beginning with his pep talk to Howell, Martin made it clear he was happy with this season.

were just two lows — when Brooks Badeaux broke his leg and when we lost the final game in the regional.

"The highs far outweighed the lows."

Martin admitted he was disappointed about not making it to the College World Series. He had been excited about the possibilities for his team. Yes, a lack of pitching depth ultimately decided the NCAA East Regional. But FSU had enough proven starters for the CWS format, which allows more rest between games.

Despite giving up 37 hits to Auburn, FSU was outscored just 20-18 in the three games. The Seminoles had power and numerous other of fensive contributors — elements that were often missing during their quick departures from the

"This definitely was a club that could have done well in Omaha," Martin said.

"This undoubtedly will be the biggest challenge in my 19 years as

Drew and Morris combined for 56 homers, 216 RBIs, 195 hits and 57 stolen bases this season. Drew just missed becoming only the third ACC player to win the triple crown

Next season's preparation began Monday when Martin met individually with a half-dozen players. The most important meeting may have been with junior shortstop Badeaux, who earlier said he'd like to begin his professional baseball career this summer. Martin said Badeaux left Monday's meeting open-minded about his future, as did junior pitcher Randy Choate. Catcher Jeremy Salazar and pitcher Randy Niles will also consider leaving FSU early if drafted.

"We're going to need all the help we can get for next year."

"I look at this season as one with so many highs," Martin said. "I look at what this team accomplished with a lot of pride. There

FSU	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
Proctor, L 7-1	½	2	2	0	2	1
Bentley	4½	4	2	2	4	2
Stanford	3	3	1	1	1	1
Auburn						
Hudson, W 14-2	8	5	2	1	4	12
Dunham	1	0	0	0	0	1

WP—Hudson, U—Zibelli, Sylvester, Riggers,
Perez. T—2:57. A—4:732.