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MDC baseball advances to national tourney

By Walter Villa
Special to the Miami Herald

The Miami Dade College baseball team fought back from the loser's bracket this week in Lakeland to win its first state title since 2001.

The Sharks split their first two games in the double-elimination tournament before winning three in a row.

MDC will now play for the national junior college title May 24 to 31 at Grand Junction, Colorado. MDC last won a national title in 1981.

The Sharks were led this week by freshman second baseman Darren Seferina, who was named first-team All-State. MDC's Danny Price was named the state's Coach of the Year.

AWARD CANDIDATES

With their regular season ending this weekend, Miami Hurricanes catcher/DH Zack Collins appears to be a front-runner for ACC Freshman of the Year. Miami junior Chris Diaz is a strong candidate for ACC Pitcher of the Year.

Two of Collins' main competitors for the freshman award are his teammates — outfielder Willie Abreu and closer Bryan Garcia.

Collins entered this weekend hitting .298 with eight homers, 44 RBI and a .548 slugging percentage, which ranks second in the ACC. He has been even better against ACC teams, hitting .348 with five homers, 26 RBI and a .609 slugging percentage.

Abreu's overall numbers: a team-best .327 batting average, one homer, 27 RBI and a .375 slugging percentage.

Garcia's numbers: 5-3, 1.74 ERA and 14 saves, second in the ACC behind Virginia junior Nick Howard (17).

ESPNU RIPS THE U

ESPNU recently rated the Miami Hurricanes as having the worst home-field advantage in college football. That's harsh, perhaps, but it's up to Canes fans to fill up Sun Life Stadium or that perception will continue.

Speaking of fans, the Canes will play at Nebraska on Sept. 20 at 8 p.m. Nebraska has 333 consecutive sellouts, the longest active streak in college football. Nebraska has sold out every home game since 1962.

FIU SLUGGERS

First baseman Stephanie Texeira of FIU's softball team was named Conference USA's Freshman of the Year after hitting .408, the second-highest batting average in program history. She also had the second most homers (11) in FIU history.

On the baseball team, catcher Aramis Garcia leads the league in slugging percentage (.588), ranks second in batting average (.353) and homers (seven) and third in on-base percentage (.428).

NOVA PLACES THREE

Laruschka Joubert, a freshman from South Africa who throws the javelin, is the only women's track athlete from Nova who qualified for the NCAA Division II national track and field championships, which starts Thursday in Allendale, Michigan.

Nova also qualified two men's track athletes, both of them juniors from Florida: pole vaulter Ryan Jerothe and sprinter Talyn Washington.

Barry Honoree

Barry sophomore Renato Lombardi, who has a 3.94 grade-point average while majoring in finance, was named the men's tennis NCAA Elite 89 award winner. Lombardi, who is from Switzerland, won the award for having the highest GPA among the 16 teams at nationals this week.