FSU Started Winning After Disastrous Loss

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It didn’t take Bobby Bowden long to turn a loser into a winner—a big winner at that.

Bowden stole away from West Virginia in the dead of winter less than two years ago to take over as Florida State head football coach.

Consider the Seminoles had won a total of just four games in three years prior to the hiring of Bowden.

In Bowden’s first three games last year, it looked like a slow rebuilding process. Miami of Florida turned the Seminoles away 27-0 in one of the games and two other losses were. But the third defeat was a 24-9 setback to Oklahoma—the first ray of light.

Over the last eight games, Florida State won five times. Now the Seminoles visit beleaguered Virginia Tech for the Gobblers’ homecoming Saturday with a 6-1 record and a ranking of 15th in the nation according to the Associated Press.

How did Bowden do it?

“We’ve been mighty fortunate,” said the Florida State coach in a southern drawl typical of his native Alabama.

Then the reason.

“When we got beat 47-0, we made wholesale changes the next week,” said Bowden. “We haven’t played a bad game since although we haven’t won every game.”

Bowden took over the sagging program from Darrell Mudra, whose misfortune it was to win just four games in three seasons.

“He (Mudra) was getting some good players,” claims Bowden, who obviously had some material in the inherited program.

“He might have done the job if they had let him stay. But he’s different than any coach you’ve ever seen. He coached from the press box and a lot of people got on him.”

“They didn’t have a lot of training rules. The town of Tallahassee (where State is located) is pretty conservative.”

When Bowden arrived, rules came with him. He’s not worried about players being too modern these days to be limited by a few standards.

“They’ve accepted the rules. If the players are too modern and don’t like the rules, I don’t recruit them,” he said simply.

Bowden says he expected improvement, but he never figured Florida State would have the kind of success it’s enjoying so soon.

“We started six freshmen last year and three this year. So it’s happened sooner than I thought and that’s why I’m reluctant to say we have a good team. Young people have a tendency to level off and they haven’t leveled off,” said Bowden.

One of the freshmen recruited this year is nose guard Ron Simmons. He’s already been honored as lineman of the week for his defensive work in a 35-14 victory over North Texas State.

“He chose Florida State because he knew he could play now—quicker than he could at other places,” said Bowden of a player who obviously got away from some of the big Southeastern Conference powers.

Recruiting is one of the reasons Bowden left West Virginia on the fly during the winter of 1976 and getting players like Simmons, according to the Seminole coach, is more likely to happen at his new job.

“We could get some good players at West Virginia,” said Bowden, “but only 150 schools in the state played football. We had to go to Pennsylvania, Ohio and Virginia where you’re second and not number one.”

According to Bowden, the state of Florida has 9,000,000 people. While Florida State doesn’t get all the choice athletes, Bowden says there are enough to go around. Last year Florida State got 18 Floridians and six more from south Georgia, which is like home recruiting territory to northern Florida based school.

“We haven’t taken over No. 1 in this state. Flori-