

SPORTS

Vikings swing hot bats on cold Panhandle day

Three homers in 13-3 defeat of Gulf Coast

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The baseball was about as good as it could get on a 50-degree February night in a 25 mph wind.

At least it was for St. Johns River State College, which blasted host Gulf Coast State College 13-3 as the Kevin Miller Classic began

Thursday in Panama City.

Omar Villaman, Hunter Alexander and Nick Koslowski all homered in a 12-hit offense, the Vikings played error-free baseball in the brutal conditions and Andy Toelken and Rhys Pollock combined in a five-hitter. St. Johns won its third straight, improving to 5-2, and Gulf Coast dropped to 4-2 in the teams' first meeting since a 17-inning state tournament duel won by the Vikings last May.

That was a hot spring day in Lakeland. The weather couldn't have been more different in the Panhandle on Thursday, but at least the wicked wind was blowing out.

"We competed really, really well," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "Our guys are starting to relax and play. The energy was good. It was about as good as we could we could play this time of year."

The Vikings jumped on Nick Nelson (1-1), a Florida signee who

drew a number of pro scouts to the game. He threw 57 pitches in two innings and stepped aside in the third as SJR State ran its lead to 8-2.

Koslowski's two-run homer got the Vikings on the board in a four-run second that also included two singles, a walk and a hit batsman. Matthew Rhodes' triple was the big blow in a four-run third.

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Villaman, Koslowski, Rhodes and Alec Dowell had two hits apiece. Continuing his early season tear, Villaman was 2-4 with a home run, a double and two RBI. Wes Weeks was 1-4 with three RBI. The other St. Johns hits were Alexander's homer and singles by Cole Perry and Nick Owens.

Alexander's three-run shot made it 13-3 in the top of the seventh and the game was halted on the mercy rule after Pollock retired the Commodores in order in the bottom half.

Toelken (2-0) pitched five and a third innings, striking out six, walking one and allowing four hits and three earned runs. Pollock struck out two and allowed one hit while finishing up.

"We were about as clean and mistake-free as we could be tonight," Jones said.

SJR State faces Georgia's Gordon State College today as the classic continues.