

# SPORTS

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## Vikings bounce back from Santa Fe loss

### Two games back with five remaining in MFC

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Santa Fe College punched its state tournament ticket and strengthened its case to displace St. Johns River State College as Mid-Florida Conference baseball champion on a windswept Saturday after-

noon in Gainesville.

Kyle Morton spotted the Vikings a run in the first and followed with seven shutout innings, allowing just one hit after the fourth inning of a 5-1 victory that made the Saints the first team to take a season series from St. Johns since 2012.

But the Saints' work isn't done yet.

SJR State was a 6-4 winner at Seminole Monday to climb back within two games of Santa Fe, which lost 10-1 at streaking Central

Florida. The Vikings are 36-9 overall and 14-5 in the conference and face third-place Central Florida (28-15, 10-9), the winner of nine straight in Ocala on Wednesday.

There are five conference games remaining, which made Monday's win huge for St. Johns.

"After losing Friday (at Florida State College-Jacksonville) and Saturday, we needed to get back on track," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "We came out and scored right away. We pitched well.

Seminole may be the best offensive club in the conference and Andy's (Toelken) beat them twice. He just poured it in the zone."

Four St. Johns pitchers allowed 13 hits, but walked none. Toelken (8-1) worked seven and a third, striking out five and allowing three runs, two earned. Ryan Ross and Pearson McMahan got the Vikings out of the eighth, and Tyler Carr pitched the ninth for his 12th save.

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## Vikings

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St. Johns turned Nick Owens' single, Omar Villaman's RBI double and fly balls by Alec Dowell and Hunter Alexander into two runs in the first inning. Jimbo Reemsnyder hit his third home run of the season, a solo shot, in fifth. The Vikings' lead grew to 6-1 in the top of the sixth on three runs behind singles from Alexander, Owens and Wes Weeks, a double by Matthew Rhodes, an RBI groundout by Nick Koslowski and a walk to Reemsnyder.

Owens and Villaman each went 2-5 with one RBI.

Saturday's game was as tight as one might expect of a showdown between the league leaders.

Villaman and Weeks began with consecutive singles for the Vikings. A double play erased Weeks but got Villaman to third and he scored from there for a 1-0 lead.

Playing for the fourth time in six days, SJR State summoned Andrew Vaccacio from the bullpen for a rare start and he responded with four shutout innings, striking out five along the way before Wyatt Meisterhans doubled to lead off the fifth and scored on a one-out single by Danny Hernandez. McMahan got out of the inning with a couple of

strikeouts, but gave up three hits that the Saints, with the help of a passed ball, converted into two runs and a 3-1 lead.

McMahan (5-1) would become the third St. Johns pitcher to suffer his first loss of the season at the hands of Santa Fe, joining Toelken and Carr.

Meanwhile, Morton (5-2) kept getting stronger.

He gave up six hits through four innings – a stretch during which the Vikings stranded seven runners – but just one hit after that. Troy Bacon took over in the ninth and struck out the side after a leadoff walk.

"He just got better and better," said Jones of Morton. "(Vaccacio) threw the ball well."

The Saints loaded the bases in the eighth without hitting the ball out of the infield – an error and two bunt singles – before Hernandez came through with a two-run single that made it 5-1.

"We don't make a couple of plays defensively and that's the ball game," Jones said. "You've got to give all the credit to Johnny Wiggs and his team. They've outplayed us three times. They're really good. They can mix and match."

The St. Johns hits were all singles – one each by Villaman, Weeks, Dowell, Koslowski, Alexander, Andrew Williamson and Owens.