

# SPORTS

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B SECTION

## STAR AT SECOND



SJR State second baseman Omar Villaman works a double play during the state tournament in May. TOM HAGERTY / Polk State College

# Walk-on Wonder

## Vikings' Villaman draws NJCAA honorable mention

BY ANDY HALL  
*Palatka Daily News*

**A** walk-on from Harmony High School in Osceola County, Omar Villaman was a role player in 2014, his first season with St. Johns River State College.

The 2015 season was shaping up as more of the same, provided he made the squad. He didn't — by design.

Villaman redshirted, then responded this season by batting .409, mostly in the leadoff spot, and earning honorable mention on the recently released NJCAA All-America team.

He led the state in 2016 with 69 runs and 88 hits. His batting average was sixth in the state and his 18 doubles were third. Villaman also had five triples, three home runs, 47 RBI and a .482 on-base percentage.

It was a positive response, to say the least, from having been redshirted in 2015.

"He came in as a freshman and had 50-60 at-bats," said SJR State coach Ross Jones, who sent Villaman to the plate 257 times this year.

"We were so deep in the infield (going into the next season), I felt like instead of being a role guy, he needed to spend a year in the weight room.

"The biggest thing was I didn't want him to waste a year. The way he handled (being red-shirted) was outstanding."

Villaman spent most of the season at second base, where he compiled a .977 fielding percentage. He was in on 31 double plays, fifth best in the state.

"I considered him part of my 2015 recruiting class. I didn't think I could find a better high school middle infielder," Jones said. "I told him, 'You do the job (in the weight room) and you're going to be a guy next year.' And obviously he was — first-team all-state and honorable mention All-American."

Villaman has signed with Florida Southern College, a Division II national power that plays its home games at Lakeland's Henley Field, where the Vikings were 2-2 in the state tournament in May.

"He likes hitting there," Jones said.