



Photos by CHRIS DEVITTO / Palatka Daily News

Above, Maegan Stone, a freshman from Clay High, throws during practice. Below, Jill Semento is entering her second season as coach.

## The Next Stage

Semento's first team won 28 games, but missed state

BY MARK BLUMENTHAL  
Palatka Daily News

Last year's "getting to know you" session worked out nicely for a team transitioning from one coach to another.

Now after missing the postseason by one game in the Mid-Florida Conference standings, St. Johns River State College's softball team is looking for a postseason spot in what will be the last year that four teams automatically qualify for the state tournament from each conference.

"I'm very confident about this team," SJRSC coach Jill Semento said. "The shakiest part of our team could be our outfield, but I don't see too many non-routine plays involving them."

Semento begins her second year coaching the Vikings and after becoming the first SJRSC softball coach to have a winning record in program history when they went 28-25, the expectations are a bit higher this spring.

Two of this year's starting pitchers were pitchers last year – Christiana Marasa, a right-hander, and Skye Davenport, another right-hander. The third pitcher is newcomer and newcomer Madison Roeshink, a left-hander, from Orange City University High.

"Maddy is about 5-foot-9 and she throws hard," Semento said. "With her being left-handed, that gives teams a whole different look. Marasa has gotten into the weight room and she's throw a lot harder in the offseason."

Add relievers Alexis Adams, Mallory Lowe and Lacy McClellan (recovering from an injury at the moment) and this gives Semento more pitching depth than she did a year ago.

Jordan Phillips returns to play catcher, but will be relieved of her duties from time to time by backups Brittany Lewis, Courtney Malburg and Rachel Johnson, Putnam County's softball player of the year from Interlachen. The infield is solid with Kayla Kight returning, but playing first base this



year after playing third a year ago, Sydney Shows returning to second base and newcomers Maegan Stone, a Clay High graduate, and Selena Bezares, a Plant City Durant graduate, moving in to play shortstop and third base, respectively.

The outfield for now consists of Emily Collier, a former All-County standout at Peniel Baptist Academy, playing left field, newcomer Taylor Nilsson of Gainesville Buchholz, patrolling center field and Ta'Shylla Brockington moving out to right field.

Behind players like first-team All-MFC player Savannah Montgomery, Haley Wildes and Shelby Griffis, the Vikings were able to help the transition of coaches from former mentor Katie Brosky to Semento a success. The 28 wins were the second-most for a Vikings team in a season after the 33 won by the 2015 club that went to the state playoffs.

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## Softball

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The Vikings got off to a strong start a year ago, but faded with too many doubleheader splits. It eventually caught up to them and when they finally got their first doubleheader sweep of the season April 17 at Santa Fe, it was too late as Florida State College-Jacksonville swept Seminole State on the same day to claim the fourth and final postseason spot.

"It would have been great to make the state tournament, but we can't live in the past," she said. "We have to go forward and be better. We're trying to make it more competitive in our

Semento said she asked her players to keep themselves active over the break after a fairly successful fall season. Now she said she believes they are ready to go in what will be the last year that the top four teams in the conference standings go to the state tournament. Starting next season, the conference winner goes automatically, while the teams ranked second through fourth will fight it out to be the second team to make it to the tourney.

"We have good defense, pitching and hitting," Semento said. "There's nothing I'm super worried about. This is going to be one of the teams that will make the routine plays. I can see us competing. I don't know what the other teams in our conference have on the team, but we're going to be competitive in each game we play."

### AT A GLANCE

**Head coach:** Jill Semento, second year (fifth year total).  
**Career record:** 82-144.  
**Last year's record:** 28-25, fifth in the Mid-Florida Conference.  
**Assistant coaches:** Taylor Douglass, Mindi Buckles.  
**Roster:** Ta'Shylla Brockington (sophomore RF/Brooksville Nature Coast); Emily Collier (so. LF/Peniel Baptist); Sky Davenport (so. SP/Bushnell South Sumter); Jessie Grissom (so. INF/Oviedo Hagerty); Kayla Kight (so. 1B/Creekside); Mallory Lowe (so. RP/North Marion); Courtney Malburg (so. C/Naples Palmetto Ridge); Christiana Marasa (so. SP/Jensen Beach); Lacy McClellan (so. RP-OF/Darton State College); Jordan Phillips (so. C/Riverview); Sydney Shows (so. 2B/Mayo Lafayette); Alexis Adams (freshman RP-INF/Yulee); Selena Bezares (fr. 3B/Plant City Durant); Marissa Huggins (fr. utility/Eustis); Rachel Johnson (fr. C-3B/Interlachen); Brittany Lewis (fr. C-OF/Gainesville); Taylor Nilsson (fr. CF/Gainesville Buchholz); Madison Roeshink (fr. SP-utility/Orange City University); Maegan Stone (fr. INF/Clay); Jessica Vazquez (fr. OF/Parkland Stoneman Douglas).