

SPORTS

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2017

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Vikings blank 'Bama team

Palatka Daily News

Zach Blankenship and David Litchfield combined on a five-hit shut-out, striking out 10, and the St. Johns River State College baseball team flexed its muscle in the late innings of a 6-0 victory over Alabama's Lurleen B. Wallace College in the first of its three weekend games at Chipola College in Marianna.

It was a 2-0 game going to the seventh when Michael Koenig's RBI triple keyed a two-run inning. Cole Perry followed with a two-run homer in the eighth. Justin Smith also homered for the Vikings, who improved to 15-7. It was only the second loss in 11 games this year for Wallace.

"It was a pitchers' duel for seven innings," SJR State coach Ross Jones said. "Zach pitched pretty well today. He retired 14 in a row at one point. He was very efficient."

Blankenship (1-0) pitched 6 1/3 innings, striking out six, walking one

and giving up four hits. Litchfield finished to earn his first save, striking out four, walking two and allowing one hit.

Koenig, Perry and Josh Broughton each went 2-for-4 in a nine-hit St. Johns offense. The other hits were Smith's home run and singles by Kerry Carpenter and Andrew Williamson.

"We had some opportunities we didn't take advantage of in the middle innings, but we had some good at-bats," Jones said.

The Vikings play the host and state's top-ranked team, Chipola, then face another Alabama team, Shelton State, on Sunday.

"Defensively, we made a few changes. Pablo Ceden played real well at third base," Jones said. "We've got two more opportunities to see what we've got before conference play."

SJR State hosts Seminole State in its first Mid-Florida Conference game on Wednesday.