

SPORTS

Baseball bows to Chipola, 'Bama club

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St. Johns River State College has played .500 baseball over its last eight games, dropping the last two in a weekend series at Chipola College, but may have found some answers with Mid-Florida Conference play about to begin.

"The one good thing coming away from the weekend is that we shored some things up defensively," said SJR State coach Ross Jones Monday, reflecting on losses of 12-5 on Saturday to host Chipola and 10-5 on Sunday to Shelton State of Alabama. The Vikings, who opened the weekend with a 6-0 defeat of Alabama's L.B. Wallace on Friday, bring a 15-9 record into Wednesday's conference opener with 12-10 Seminole State.

Jones was particularly

pleased with the third-base play of Pablo Ceden, who also went 1-4 in the Shelton State game.

The Vikings enter the three-game Seminole series with uncertainty about the third spot in the pitching rotation. Trevin Eubanks hasn't pitched in 10 days and Scott Kobos hasn't played since he injured an AC joint making a diving catch in center field against South Georgia on Feb. 19. They got a strong start Friday from Zach Blankenship and will open Wednesday with Pearson McMahan.

It took St. Johns 236 pitches to get through the Shelton State game.

"We were in three-ball counts the entire day. You can't be successful doing that," Jones said. "We were throwing some young arms out there. We're a little banged up

to expect to go in there and play with those teams."

The Vikings were in a 10-0 hole after four innings Sunday but wound up out-hitting Shelton State, 11-10. Justin Smith homered and doubled in five at-bats. Kerry Carpenter was 2-3 with a triple and Josh Broughton was 2-4. Ceden, Brian Moore, Michael Koenig, Jimmy Goldsmith and Andrew Williamson had one hit apiece.

Starter Jaison Heard (1-1) took the loss.

St. Johns only had three hits Saturday against a Chipola team it defeated at home two weeks earlier. All three went for extra bases – Carpenter's home run and doubles by Nick Owens and Nick Koslowski.

The first of four pitchers, Clay Helvey (2-1) wound up with the loss.