

SPORTS

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C SECTION

St. Johns wins in ninth, faces Santa Fe today

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The stage is set for another St. Johns-Santa Fe series, but not without an awful lot of work Friday at Lake-Sumter.

The first-place Vikings had a nine-inning battle with the also-ran LakeHawks before escaping with a 4-2 victory, scoring twice in the ninth inning of a Mid-Florida Conference game in Leesburg. St. Johns River State (20-10, 5-1) got seven strong innings from Clay

Helvey, two perfect innings from Andrew Vaccacio (3-1) and an 8-15 performance out of No. 1-3 batters Nick Owens, Kerry Carpenter and Justin Smith.

Every bit of it was needed against Lake-Sumter (9-15, 1-2), which won the opening game of the series on Monday and took the Vikings into the 10th before losing on Wednesday. Now comes Santa Fe (19-7, 2-1) in the first of a three-game set today at Tindall Field. The teams have won

the last eight MFC championships.

"It's us and Santa Fe at the top again - nothing new," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "We expect a great series with them."

The Lake-Sumter series was pretty darned good.

Friday's rubber game was tied 2-2 going to the ninth, when the Vikings' Scott Kobos got a one-out walk and Jimbo Reemsnyder singled to put runners on first and second. Owens punched a single to right, scoring

Kobos in a close play, then Carpenter did the same, bringing in pinch-runner Gabriel Coburn on another close play.

Vaccacio (2-2) pitched a 1-2-3 bottom half to close the door on the 'Hawks.

Jones gave much of the credit to his starting pitcher, Helvey, who struck out eight, walked none and allowed two runs on eight hits.

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St. Johns

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"Clay Helvey won this game for us," Jones said. "He threw an extra dozen pitches because we made errors that put runners in scoring position. Clay fought his tail off and got better as the game went along."

Vaccacio struck out three of the six batters he faced.

The Vikings were the first on the board, getting an RBI single from Kobos in the second. The hit scored Nick Koslowski, who had doubled. Lake-Sumter put up single runs in the third and fourth innings before SJR State tied it in the fifth, getting a run out of successive two-out singles by Owens, Carpenter and

Smith.

"We got some timely hitting," Jones said.

Owens and Smith were both 3-5, each with an RBI, and Carpenter was 2-5. The Vikings' other hits were Koslowski's double and singles by Kobos, Reemsnyder and Scott Broughton.

Zach Blankenship (2-0) is the Vikings' starting pitcher today.