

SPORTS

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B SECTION

RUNDOWN FEELING



Photos by CHRIS DEVITTO / Palatka Daily News

Above, SJR State second baseman Michael Koenig readies for a pickoff throw to tag Santa Fe's Mikey Navarette. Below, the Vikings celebrate Justin Smith's (7) fourth-inning home run.

No Giving In

Vikings come back in ninth, 12th and 14th to beat Saints

BY ANDY HALL
Palatka Daily News

No one seems willing to give in the battle for supremacy in the Mid-Florida Conference between its last two champions, St. Johns River State College and Santa Fe College.

They went at it for 14 innings as Wednesday afternoon gave way to Wednesday night at chilly Tindall Field.

The visiting Saints took leads with single runs in the ninth, 12th and 14th innings. The Vikings answered every time.

Pablo Cedenro, of all people, had the final answer.

The light-hitting third baseman launched a 3-2 pitch over the fence in left center with two aboard, lifting St. Johns to a 7-5 victory and evening an intense series in which Santa Fe had taken the first game 1-0 on Saturday.

Given the way this one unfolded, it's anybody's guess what will happen when they meet again in Gainesville on Friday afternoon. It will be important not just to seventh-ranked SJR State (21-11, 6-2) and No. 3 Santa Fe (20-8, 3-2), but unranked Daytona State (13-10, 6-2), which shares first place in the MFC after beating



Lake-Sumter 6-3 on Wednesday.

"I'm proud of my guys. They really competed," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "We just have to keep competing."

Cedenro's home run capped a 3-for-6 game for the Vikings' No. 9 batter, whose 12th-inning single positioned Andrew Williamson to score the run that made it 4-4. Kyle Phillips lined a solo home run to right with one out in the Santa Fe 14th for a 5-4 lead and it looked like that might be enough with St. Johns' 7-8-9 batters due in the home half.

Not so. Jimmy Goldsmith and Jimbo Reemnsnyder both walked on 3-2

pitches. After Cedenro bunted foul twice while running the count to 3-2, Jones had him swinging away.

"A guy hitting .152 and hitting zero-zero-zero in conference (before Wednesday) hits a three-run jack," Jones said. "It's ironic that a guy who couldn't get a bunt down and is swinging only because it's 3-2 got the fastball he needed."

The winning pitcher was the Vikings' fifth, Zach Greene (4-0), who got the last two outs in the top of the 14th. The fourth pitcher, Andrew Vaccacio, got St Johns

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Vikings

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from the ninth into the 14th in his longest stint of the year, striking out five, walking none and allowing two runs on three hits. Starter Scott Kobos went seven innings, striking out seven, walking one and allowing four hits, including Bo Seccombe's two-run homer in the seventh.

Trevin Eubanks pitched a scoreless eighth. Jagger McCoy

got the first out in the ninth, but also walked the runner that scored on an error after Pearson McMahan had gotten the second out. Vaccacio came on after that.

"It was a great-pitched ball game," Jones said. "Scott Kobos did a great job. Andrew Vaccacio kept us it in."

The Vikings broke on top in the fourth on Justin Smith's two-run homer to left center. It was still a 2-0 game in the seventh when SJR State made its first error of the day, followed by Seccombe's two-run homer.

The Saints turned a walk, a wild pitch and an error into a run in the ninth, then turned to closer Troy Bacon, who took the mound with seven saves and a 0.00 ERA.

It went up when Nick Koslowski singled up the middle with one out, scoring Michael Koenig, who drew a leadoff walk and moved to second on Josh Broughton's bunt. Bacon also pitched the 10th, then left.

Singles by Phillips and Stephen Smith and Wyatt Meisterhans' bunt produced a run in the 12th as Santa Fe went up 4-3.

Williamson walked to lead off the bottom half, but after a couple of strikeouts, the Vikings were down to Cedenro, who singled a 2-2 pitch to right, sending Williamson to third. Nick Owens got into a 3-2 battle with Mitch Campion and won when his grounder up the middle couldn't be handled, scoring Williamson to make it 4-4.

Koslowski and Kerry Carpenter were 2-4, Broughton 2-5 to join Cedenro with multiple hits for the Vikings. Their other hits were Smith's home run and singles by Owens and Cole Perry.