

SPORTS

OUT AT HOME



CHRIS DEVITTO / Palatka Daily News

SJR State catcher Jimbo Reemsnyder tags Rollins' Ben Johnston out at home.

Conference Call

Back to work in MFC for Vikings after beating Rollins JV

BY ANDY HALL
Palatka Daily News

Forty-six games into the season and the St. Johns River State College baseball team is about to start anew in its bid for a fifth consecutive state tournament berth.

"We're 0-0," said SJR State coach Ross Jones Friday after the Vikings beat the Rollins College junior varsity 8-2 in their final nonconference game of the season at Tindall Field.

Actually, St. Johns is 31-15, but the Mid-Florida Conference season has boiled down to a six-game sprint over the next two weeks – one game with each MFC rival. The Vikings share first place with Santa Fe at 14-4.

"It comes down to those six games. We're ready to get back into conference," said Jones at the end of a 1-2 week of nonconference games during which the Vikings sometimes appeared disinterested.

Quality pitching carried them Friday until a five-run eighth inning gave them room to breathe.

Five pitchers combined on a four-hitter, led by starter Scott Kobos (5-2), who struck out five, walked one and allowed one run on three hits. He departed with a 3-1 lead. Relievers Zach Greene and Andrew Vaccacio posted five straight strikeouts over the eighth and ninth.

The Vikings broke on top when Nick Koslowski

began his 3-4 day with a one-out double to left, scoring Kerry Carpenter. They scored two in the second, getting a one-out triple from Nick Owens, who came in on a single by Pablo Cedeno, who scored on a two-out error.

The Tars (10-8) got a run off two singles and a fielder's choice in the third and crept within 3-2 on Elliotte Cutillas' solo homer in the sixth.

Greene, Vaccacio and Jaison Heard got Rollins in order the last three innings, but St. Johns didn't give its pitchers a cushion until the eighth.

Koslowski beat out an infield hit, moved to third on a wild pitch and Jimmy Goldsmith's groundout, then scored when Josh Broughton punched a single to left. Andrew Williamson walked and Michael Koenig was hit by a pitch to load the bases. A wild pitch plated Broughton and Cedeno was hit by a pitch to re-load the bases for Brian Moore, who drilled a two-run, ground-rule double to left. Carpenter's sacrifice fly scored Cedeno and it was 8-2.

"We've got to continue to get better offensively," said Jones, whose team had only two hits from the third inning to the seventh. "We started off great, finished great, but let them hang around."

Conference play resumes Monday at Seminole, a team the Vikings swept with ease a month ago but one that has thrust itself into contention for third place – and a potential state tournament play-in game – with a four-game win streak.