

SPORTS

www.palatkadailynews.com

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2017

PAGE 8A

Only trouble for St. Johns at Santa Fe

Vikings maintain slim lead in conference

BY ANDY HALL
Palatka Daily News

GAINESVILLE – The pitch-by-pitch intensity for which St. Johns River State College-Santa Fe College baseball games have come to be known was decidedly absent on Friday.

That's not all that was missing for St. Johns.

"Nothing," said Vikings coach Ross Jones. "We just didn't do anything."

Nothing, at least, after a first-inning run in an 11-1 wipeout with which Santa Fe claimed the season series, 3-1.

The first three meetings had been decided by a total of four runs; this one ended in the seventh inning on the 10-run rule.

The Vikings (33-16, 16-5) still lead the Saints (32-11, 15-5) by a half-game in the Mid-Florida Conference with three games left in the regular season – Santa Fe has four more – but their breathing room is all but gone.

They're home this afternoon to play a Daytona Beach squad (20-18, 11-10) in a three-team struggle for third place and a state tournament play-in game. St. Johns' ticket to Lakeland is punched, as is Santa Fe's.

SJR State got its only run Friday in the first after Nick Owens flared a leadoff single to right, went to second on Kerry Carpenter's bunt, third on a passed ball and home when Josh Broughton reached on a two-out error. But the Vikings left runners at the corners, stranding five the first three innings.

The real trouble for St. Johns began

in the bottom of the first.

The Saints had runners on the corners on an error and a single, but Scott Kobos was an out from escaping when Santa Fe pulled off a double steal that shouldn't have worked.

The Vikings were on the verge of getting Alex Goebel between first and second when they abruptly – and unsuccessfully – threw home. Kyle Phillips scored, Goebel eased into second and Brandon Hernandez and Danny DiMare followed with RBI singles for a 3-1 lead.

See **VIKINGS**, Page 9A

Vikings

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8A

It was the beginning of a 4-4, four-RBI day for DiMare. Goebel, too, went 4-4, including a bloop double that barely cleared the clay but was lost in the sun by Vikings second baseman Michael Koenig. Another misjudged fly gave DiMare a two-run single in the fourth as the Santa Fe lead swelled to 8-1.

"We gave them six or seven runs," Jones said. "We lose two balls in the sun, don't execute on a first-and-third play. We're down 3-1 and get picked off second base."

Kobos (5-3) struggled through four innings, allowing eight runs on eight hits. He struck out two, walked four and hit a batter.

"Scotty didn't have his best day at all," Jones said. "He was up in the zone, didn't have a crisp breaking ball. It's tough when you don't have anything going and don't pitch in advantage counts."

Santa Fe's Robert Girgis (7-2) held the Vikings to five singles. He faced the minimum after the third inning, one St. Johns hitter caught stealing and the other doubled off.

Owens and Cole Perry were both 2-3, Broughton 1-3 for SJR State.