

## FCSAA BASEBALL TOURNAMENT



TOM HAGERTY / Special To The Daily News

At top, St. Johns River State College's Josh Broughton puts a bat on the ball during Friday's opening-round game against Chipola State College. Below, SJRSC's Pearson McMahan delivers a pitch to a Chipola State batter

# A Frustrating End

### Chipola gets to pen, puts SJR into elimination bracket

BY ANDY HALL  
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LAKELAND

In what might be his final appearance for St. Johns River State College, Pearson McMahan frustrated the state's top-ranked junior college baseball team for six scoreless innings.

It would be McMahan and the Vikings who wound up frustrated, not to mention a game away from elimination in the FCSAA state tournament.

Chipola College broke through with two out in the seventh – a three-run home run from the state's leading hitter and RBI man, Andrew Bechtold – and the Indians followed with two insurance runs in the eighth for a 5-2 victory in the tournament opener Friday at Joker Marchant Stadium.

McMahan, who had won six straight, struck out 10, walked five and gave up three singles

#### TODAY

SJRSC vs. Tallahassee, 4 p.m. at Marchant Stadium



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## Vikings

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before exiting with one out in the seventh with a 2-0 lead, and runners at first and second – the last batter having walked on a close 3-2 pitch.

Lefthanded reliever Andrew Vaccacio got Edmond American to ground to shortstop Nick Owens, who made a slick stoop-and-throw to third baseman Josh Broughton to cut down the lead runner, Chris Clayton, for the second out. But Vaccacio (4-3) hung a 2-1 pitch to the .445-hitting Bechtold, who made it disappear over the right field fence.

"(McMahan) battled and battled," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "Vaccacio left a pitch up and the second-best player in the state hits a three-run jack."

The Indians (41-8) scored two more in the eighth off Vaccacio and

Zach Greene with two walks, two errors and Clayton's sacrifice fly. Josh Broughton doubled to begin the Viking ninth, but Riley Cabral got Scott Kobos on a grounder and struck out Cole Perry and pinch-hitter Jimmy Goldsmith to close the door.

Chipola earned a second-round bye and does not play again until Sunday night. SJR State (36-17) plays an elimination game 4 p.m. today against Tallahassee Community College (28-24), an 11-8 loser to State College of Florida in the game after SJRSC's loss.

"We had (Chipola) on the ropes. We had them on the ropes into the seventh," Jones said. "That's the best team in the state. They are so good at everything. They're capable of a big inning at any time. Pearson pitched through their opportunities."

McMahan threw 123 pitches in his first start in 17 days.

"His wasn't as good as he's been in his last seven starts. That's what

a layoff does. I don't care how many bullpens and intersquads you throw. Game-ready is different," Jones said.

Cabral (11-0) was masterful in six innings in scoreless relief of shaky starter Brandon Francis, striking out nine, walking none and scattering four hits. St. Johns didn't get a runner as far as second against Cabral until Broughton doubled in the ninth.

"The guy's got one of the best sliders around," Jones said. "Cabral can throw the slider any time he wants. We were getting to Francis."

Francis got the first two Vikings to start the game, but the next four reached. Justin Smith doubled down the line in left, then Nick Koslowski hit the first of his two doubles, a sharp liner to right that scored Smith. Michael Koenig singled, moving Koslowski to third and it was 2-0 after the throw to get Broughton on a groundball pulled Reynaldo Rivera off first.

Francis worked a trouble-free

second, but trouble came back in the third when Smith drew a one-out walk and Koslowski hit his second double, an opposite-field drive to left. Francis escaped with a couple of strikeouts, then gave way to Cabral in the fourth.

The Vikings didn't threaten again, but their 2-0 lead was looking better and better when McMahan, dealing with runners at first and second with one out in the fifth, struck out Bechtold and Rivera. He went on to work a 1-2-3 sixth before the trouble began.

"We played our hearts out, but you've got to finish," Jones said. "That's one of the greatest sayings in sports."

Smith, Koslowski and Broughton had two hits apiece in the Vikings' eight-hit offense. Owens and Koenig both singled.

The lefthanded Kobos (6-3, 2.27 earned-run average) will start today against Tallahassee.

"This team will bounce back and play hard," Jones said.