Vikings record 14 strikeouts in first shutout of the season

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With one eye on a pair of weekend doubleheaders, St. Johns River State baseball coach Ross Jones was hoping to get three innings out of first-time starting pitcher Cameron Sereda at Polk State College.

Sereda delivered – and then some.

He worked into the fifth and struck out seven, six straight in one stretch, and the Vikings went on to their first shutout of the season, 4-0 Wednesday afternoon in Winter Haven. Four St. Johns pitchers combined to strike out 14 and Kerry Carpenter increased his nation-high hit total to 30 with a 3-for-4 performance as the Vikings improved to 9-4. They completed a regular-season sweep of the Eagles, who leveled off at 6-6.

"It was the best game we've pitched by far. That's pretty obvious," Jones said. "I was going to try to get three (innings) out of Sereda and just piece it together. He pitched really well."

Sereda (1-0) went four and a third, walking two and giving up two hits. Matt Marini finished the fifth, Jagger McCoy came on in the sixth and Luke Sutko took over with one out and runners at second and third in the ninth, serving up a couple of pop flies to complete the shutout and get his fifth save. Sutko is the state's save leader.

The Vikings began the game with three straight hits – singles by Joey Bellini and Carpenter, and a two-run double to left center by Justin Farmer. Their other runs came in the sixth off two hits, including an RBI single by Pablo Cedeno, and a couple of walks.

"We had really competitive at-bats. We chased their No. 1 guy (Pat Doudican), pushed him deep in counts," Jones said. "It was a really good effort. We defended the field and pitched really, really well."

Bellini went 2-5 to complement Carpenter. The other SJR State hits were Farmer's double and singles by Cedeno, Jimmy Goldsmith and Bubba Sangster.

The Vikings go to Douglas, Ga., for a Friday afternoon doubleheader with South Georgia. The same teams play two on Sunday at Tindall Field.