

St. Johns Slugger



CHRIS DEVITTO / Palatka Daily News

Pictured in a Feb. 8 game, SJR State's Kerry Carpenter took a .571 average into Wednesday's game.

Many Happy Returns

Injured and suspended players back, Vikings record 10 extra-base hits in road win

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The St. Johns River State College baseball team made a welcome return to action Wednesday afternoon in Winter Park.

It was a particularly welcome return for two freshmen ticketed for key roles this season but idled at least three weeks by injuries.

Nick Romano hit a home run and a double, Darin Kilfoyl pitched the first two innings and the Vikings rang up 10 extra-base hits in a come-from-behind, 9-5 victory over the Rollins College junior varsity. It was the last game before the start of Mid-Florida Conference

play and the first in more than a week for SJR State, which had to forego its own Capital City Bank Classic last weekend because of a number of player suspensions for an undisclosed violation of team rules.

Romano, whose two-run homer capped the St. Johns scoring in the ninth inning, had not played in a month due to a shoulder injury. "We needed him back," said Vikings coach Ross Jones, whose team improved to 13-6. "He's not ready to play defense yet, but at least he's swinging the bat."

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Vikings

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Projected to be in the starting rotation, Kilfoyl made just two starts before he was placed on the shelf for three weeks. He allowed one run in two innings Wednesday, when Jones went with five pitchers to get them some work. They combined for 15 strikeouts – nine between Jagger

McCoy and Luke Sutko, who went the last four innings.

The win went to Matt Marini (1-2), who pitched a scoreless fifth. Sutko pitched the eighth and ninth to record his sixth save, which leads the state by three.

The Vikings were down 4-0 when Riley Wash and Joe Gunn drew two-out walks in the fifth. Joey Bellini scored Wash on a double to right center. Kerry Carpenter followed with a two-run single to right, shaving the Tars' lead to 4-3.

Jimmy Goldsmith's home run was the big blow as St. Johns took the lead for good in a three-run sixth.

The loss went to starter Cason Wright, who Jones identified as one of the Rollins varsity starters in the NCAA Division II Sunshine State Conference.

Gunn and Justin Farmer each had two doubles on a day the Vikings hit eight of them. The others came from Carpenter, Bellini, Romano and Wash.

Farmer finished 3-5 with one RBI.

Bellini, Carpenter, Romano, Goldsmith and Gunn had two hits apiece. Carpenter's 2-5 day actually cut into his batting average, which was a state-high .571 going into the game.

"We were a little sloppy defensively at times," Jones said. "No excuses, but their playing surface is like playing on asphalt with potholes. It's a super-fast surface in bad shape."

League play begins Saturday with a trip to Seminole State, which is 12-10.