

# SPORTS

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B SECTION

## Safe at Home



Seminole's Scott Fickas scores ahead of the throw to St. Johns River State catcher Riley Wash.

CHRIS DEVITTO / Palatka Daily News

# Getting it Done by Committee

Vikings use six pitchers in comeback win over Seminole State for 2-0 start in Mid-Florida Conference

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Sometimes it takes a committee. Many times, the committee messes things up, but sometimes it works. So it did Monday for the St. Johns River State College baseball team, which used six pitchers and pieced together a comeback from a five-run deficit to beat Seminole State, 8-7, on a cool night at Tindall Field. Once down 5-0, the Vikings completed their comeback with a three-run eighth that included an RBI double by Pablo Cedeno, a run-scoring single by Jimmy Goldsmith, a bunt single by Justin Farmer and a sacrifice fly by Joe Gunn.

The fifth St. Johns pitcher, Cameron Sereda,

(1-1) struck out two in a scoreless eighth and the sixth, Luke Sutko, survived a solo home run in the ninth for his state-best seventh save.

Coupled with Saturday's 6-1 defeat of Seminole in Sanford, the win gave the Vikings (15-6 overall) a 2-0 start to Mid-Florida Conference play. The Raiders are 13-12 and 0-2.

The plan Monday was for the Vikings' starter, Elijah Gill, to go deep into the game before the bullpen took over, but Seminole greeted him with five straight hits in a four-run first.

It became pitching by committee by the fourth.

"The depth of our bullpen is the central piece," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "When your starter gives you three, you've got to mix and match. The idea was to get Gill through the first three innings and go with

five or six guys."

Zach Blankenship, Austin Parsley and Rian Haire all worked in relief before Sereda came on in the eighth, the Vikings having gotten within 6-5. Sereda struck out the first batter he faced, gave up a single to Trace Thornal, then picked him off before striking out the third batter.

The rally in the home half began with a walk to Kerry Carpenter, who had a 1-2 game on the heels of an 0-5 performance Saturday that saw his average dip to .524, still the best in the state. Farmer hustled his way to a bunt single and Nick Romano's deep fly out left runners on the corners for Goldsmith, who drilled a 1-2 pitch to left center to plate Carpenter with the tying run.

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It was the third hit of the night for Goldsmith and Cedeno followed with his third hit, a double down the line in left to bring in Farmer with the go-ahead run. Gunn delivered a sacrifice fly that scored Goldsmith with what proved to a deceive insurance run.

"The important thing is that we didn't try to get it all back at one time," said Jones, whose club managed three runs in the fourth and single runs in the sixth and seventh. "We showed some patience and had some quality at-bats."

Second baseman Joey Bellini and third baseman Cedeno made strong plays on sharp grounders in ninth. Kobe Barnum followed with a solo blast to left, but Sutko slammed the door with a strikeout.

While encouraged by the performance, Jones didn't want to read too much into the victory.

"It's one game. It's a great job, but to get back to the state tournament, we've got to put together six-, seven- and eight-game win streaks."

Jaison Heard, Jagger McCoy and Matt Marini combined for 14 strikeouts and the Vikings won despite just five hits Saturday afternoon in Sanford. Heard (2-1) opened with six shutout innings, striking out eight, walking one and giving up three hits.

Bellini went 2-4 for St. Johns, which got a two-run homer from Romano, an RBI double from Gunn and a single from Goldsmith.

SJR State is back in Sanford to face Seminole on Wednesday.