

SPORTS

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B SECTION

St. Johns takes two from 'Hawks

Big Mid-Florida Conference series
with Santa Fe on the horizon

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The St. Johns River State College baseball team lived to tell about five errors at Lake-Sumter State College on Saturday, but took no chances for Monday's rematch at Tindall Field.

Infielders arrived an hour early for practice Sunday and took an hour's worth of grounders.

It paid off.

The Vikings made just one error on Monday – catcher interference – and were at times sparkling in the field on their way to a 7-3 victory, improving to 18-7 overall and 5-1 in the Mid-Florida Conference heading into a three-game series with two-time defending MFC champion Santa Fe.

Four pitchers combined to strike out 14 and Nick Romano was 3-4 with a double and three RBI to lead a 10-hit offense. The LakeHawks (9-18-1, 1-2) led only for an inning, then got a couple of runs in the ninth.

"We had a good day in practice (Sunday). I knew it wasn't going to be easy (Monday). It never is," said SJR State coach Ross Jones, whose club won 9-3 in Leesburg Saturday despite the errors. "The defense can be our Achilles' heel."

It wasn't on Monday, coming up big behind starter Rian Haire as Lake-Sumter stranded eight over the first four innings. It was a 1-1 game when he left with two out in the fourth, giving way to Matt Marini (3-2), who struck out six and allowed two hits over three and two-third innings. Jagger McCoy struck out four of the five batters he faced. Luke Sutko gave up a walk and a hit in the ninth before getting the last out.

See **VIKINGS**, Page 3B

Vikings

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

"Rian threw well. We've got to build him back after not having pitched last year," said Jones, who turned to the South Carolina transfer so the other starting pitchers could go into the Santa Fe series with a week's rest. "That's the best Marini has been in the last couple of weeks."

Pablo Cedenó's solo homer to left in the second inning was the only St. Johns hit until the fifth, when Riley Wash opened with a single to left center. Joe Gunn flared a single to left and Joey Bellini's one-out single up the middle loaded the bases for the state's leading hitter,

Kerry Carpenter.

After going 3-3 on Saturday, the left-handed-batting Carpenter was 0-4 Monday against a Lake-Sumter that had three infielders on the right side of second base, but he delivered a sacrifice fly that scored Wash with go-ahead run. Romano followed with an RBI single and it was 3-1.

Romano and Jimmy Goldsmith had run-scoring singles in the seventh and Wash hit a sacrifice fly as the lead grew to 6-1. Romano doubled home Francis Villaman for the last SJR State run in the eighth.

Gunn was 2-3, Bellini 2-5 to complement Romano. The Vikings' other hits were Cedenó's home run and singles by Wash and Goldsmith.

Elijah Gill (4-1) worked into

the eighth on Saturday, striking out seven, walking three and giving up two runs, both unearned. It was 9-2 when he stepped aside.

"We needed him to go deep into the game after playing 11 and burning Jagger (in a 10-9 loss) on Friday," Jones said. "He didn't fold after we made errors behind him on routine plays."

Justin Farmer's solo home run broke a 1-1 tie as St. Johns took the lead for good in the fourth.

Carpenter had a double and two RBI in his 3-3 day. Farmer was 2-5 with two RBI, Wash 2-5 with one RBI. Bellini, Goldsmith, Cedenó and Villaman all singled.

Darin Kilfoyl (1-1) will be the starting pitcher when the Vikings open the Santa Fe Series Wednesday afternoon in Gainesville.