

SPORTS

Top-ranked Santa Fe edges Vikings in series opener

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A fourth-inning, leadoff triple was the difference between great and good Wednesday afternoon at Santa Fe College.

Cade Westbrook tripled to left center, scoring on Haydn Gano's one-out single as the host Saints clipped St. Johns River State College, 1-0, in a Mid-Florida Conference showdown between the No. 1 (Santa Fe) and No. 9 teams in the latest state coaches' poll.

Max McKinley (4-0) gave the Saints (23-4, 4-0) a complete game, striking out 10, walking none, hitting one batter and

allowing four hits, all singles. The Vikings' four pitchers combined for nine strikeouts and allowed six hits. The loss went to the starter, Darin Kilfoyl (1-2).

So began what is shaping up as another classic series between the Saints and Vikings (18-8, 5-2), who have combined to win the last five conference championships. Game two is Friday night at Tindall Field, then the series goes back to Gainesville on Saturday.

"It was an extremely well-pitched game on both sides. The difference was the leadoff triple," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "Darin's getting stronger and

stronger. Cameron Sereda pitched well. Jagger McCoy inherited the bases loaded with one out in the seventh and got out of it."

Working on a 70-pitch limit while recovering from early season shoulder problems, Kilfoyl went the first four innings, allowing one run on three hits with two strikeouts and a walk.

But where Kilfoyl and Viking relievers were good, McKinley was great.

"McKinley was really good. He's their guy for a reason," Jones said. "He pitched both sides of the plate, pitched up and down. When we hit the ball hard, we hit

it right at people. He's the best guy we faced all year."

SJR State's best chances at McKinley all came early. The Vikings stranded runners at first and second in the first inning, at second and third in the second inning and at second in the third inning.

Their only hits were singles by Joey Bellini, Pablo Cedeno, Riley Wash and Jimmy Goldsmith. Kerry Carpenter's 0-4 day dropped his batting average to .514, keeping the state lead by two points over Jake Randa of Northwest Florida State.