

## Vikings hit hard, hit early to beat Saints

Goldsmith grand slam sets stage for 10-4 win over nation's No. 1

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Two days removed from being shut out by the top-ranked team in the state and nation, the St. Johns River State College baseball team was not fazed after falling into a two-run hole before it even came to bat in the rematch Friday night.

Jimmy Goldsmith responded with a grand slam in the bottom of the first, the Vikings had nine runs by the end of the third and dodged a bullet in the sixth on their way to a 10-4 defeat of Santa Fe College at Tindall Field.

Goldsmith homered twice, every St. Johns batter had at least one hit or one run and Jason Heard and Matt Marini combined on a six-hitter as the Vikings improved to 19-8 overall and 6-2 in the Mid-Florida Conference. The Saints are 23-5 and 4-1. Central Florida (19-6-1, 8-0) leads the league.

SJR State goes to Gainesville to complete the Santa Fe series this afternoon, then hosts Illinois' Morton College on Sunday.

The Vikings were held to four singles in a 1-0 loss in the series opener, but there was little holding them back on Friday.

"The kids had a lot of energy tonight. The kids responded well," coach Ross Jones said. "It was a long bus ride home Wednesday. I sensed something in practice (Thursday). There was real good energy. When they got here today at 3 o'clock there was that same level of energy."

Heard stumbled through the first, giving up a couple of walks, a run-scoring single and a wild pitch that allowed a run to score from second, but his troubles were nothing compared to those of the Saints' Mitch Champion.

Champion, who came in 4-0 with a 0.90 earned-run average, didn't record an out.

He gave up a single to Joey Bellini, walked Kerry Carpenter and hit Nick Romano to load the bases for Goldsmith, who launched a 1-0 pitch over the fence in right to put St. Johns ahead to stay at 4-2. Champion got the hook after hitting the next batter, Justin Farmer.

Goldsmith's one-out, solo homer to right ignited a five-run third in which

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five straight Vikings reached with two out. Joe Gunn and Francis Villaman delivered RBI singles and Bellini sent a two-run double to the fence in left as the lead swelled to 9-2.

"Jimmy Goldsmith's hitting the ball as well as he ever has. They quit pitching him inside and he hit a couple of missiles to left," Jones said. "I thought one of them was going to be a double, but their kid made a good play."

Bellini was 3-5 with a double and two RBI in an 11-hit offense. Goldsmith was 2-5

with five RBI, Gunn 2-3 with two RBI. Farmer, Villaman, Pablo Cedeno and Riley Wash had one hit apiece. Carpenter was 0-4 with a walk and saw his batting average slip to .486 – second in the state after having been first for almost two months.

After his unsteady first inning, Heard (3-1) was flawless over the next three, sailing through on 21 pitches. The Vikings' only error figured in a run in the fifth, which ended with the Saints' Jarrod Edge being cut down at the plate.

Heard gave way to Marini after a walk, a single and a run-scoring double with one out in the sixth. Marini struck

out the first batter he faced and walked the second to load the bases for pitch-hitter Jeff Misener, who went down swinging on a 3-2 pitch.

"Matt Marini pitched great," Jones said. "It could have been a one-run game right there. Heard's slider wasn't its best tonight, but he got us to the sixth. Justin Farmer made a couple of plays in center field."

Marini struck out seven, walked two and gave up two hits over three and two-thirds scoreless innings for his first save.

Gunn's double to right center plated Wash in the seventh after Marini slammed the door in the sixth.