

SPORTS

Vikings get relief, down Daytona State in 12th

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It started with a bang. It ended a duel of relief pitchers and the St. Johns River State College bullpen again proved itself the strength of the team.

The Vikings spotted Daytona State a first-inning grand slam, gave up nothing else and pulled out a 5-4 victory in the 12th inning Friday at the Falcons' field. Capping a 4-6, two-RBI day, Joey Bellini doubled off the fence in right center to score Ray Gonzalez with the go-ahead run in the top of the

12th and Luke Sutko worked a 1-2-3 bottom half.

Winning its fourth straight, St. Johns improved to 23-8 overall and 9-2 in the Mid-Florida Conference – first by percentage points over Santa Fe (25-6, 6-2), which beat third-place Central Florida (19-9-1, 8-3) Friday. The Vikings cap a three-game series with Daytona (19-12, 4-7) at Tindall Field today, then open a series with Central Florida in Ocala on Monday.

SJR State starter Jaison Heard gave up two singles and a walk in the first before Alan Burnsed got a fly ball into a favorable wind for a 4-0 Daytona State lead. Heard settled down, but the Vikings were having a hard time hitting Falcons starter Kyler Adams.

"They threw a really, really soft lefthander and we were just way out in front on him," said St. Johns coach Ross Jones. "By the sixth inning, we started to see him a little better."

Francis Villaman and Bellini sin-

gled to start the sixth and Nick Romano got the Vikings on the board with a one-out single. Justin Farmer followed with a two-run double down the line in left, bringing them within 4-3.

Bellini delivered a two-out single to right in the seventh scoring Gonzalez, who had walked and stolen second. That made it 4-4 and the duel of relievers was on.

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The Falcons' Zach Bryant (4-2), a Jacksonville University signee, was tough, striking out four and walking one over the last five innings, but he was one-upped by SJR State relievers Sutko (2-1) and Jagger McCoy.

Each pitched two and two-third scoreless innings, striking out four and walking none between them.

"We pitched really well," Jones said. "McCoy inherited a runner at second with two out and got out of it. Sutko inherited a runner at second with one out and got out of it. They brought in Bryant and he comes in throwing 93, 94 (miles per hour), but the second time around the order, we caught up with him."

Farmer was 3-6 with two RBI to complement Bellini in an 11-hit offense. "Bellini and Farmer had really good days at the plate," Jones said.

Villaman finished 2-4. Gonzalez and Romano had one hit apiece.
