

Down Goes Daytona



Photos by ANDY HALL / Palatka Daily News

Above, SJR State's Joe Gunn gets down a bunt single in Saturday's 14-4 rout of Daytona State. Below, Elijah Gill pitched a five-inning complete game.

The Great Escapes

Vikings turn back two bases-loaded threats at Central Florida; drill Daytona

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Darin Kilfoyl walked the bases loaded before he got an out at the College of Central Florida Monday afternoon, his St. Johns River State College baseball team having scored two runs in the top of the first.

He escaped.

The Vikings had a six-run lead in the fifth when Central Florida loaded the bases again with nobody out. SJR State coach Ross Jones went to the bullpen rather than bank on another great escape by Kilfoyl.

Matt Marini pulled off the great escape, serving up two infield pops and striking out the third batter and St. Johns held on from there for its sixth straight victory, 8-5.

The Patriots scored an unearned run in the sixth and got a three-run homer in the seventh, but Jagger McCoy came on to pitch two scoreless innings for his third save. Marini (4-2) got the win.

"I thought the game was being played right there," said Jones of his decision to change pitchers with a six-run lead in the fifth. "They loaded the bases, nobody out and they had 3-4-5 (batters) coming. I had to go to Matt and he pitched really well.

"It's a win against one of the top three clubs in the conference and it's on the road. Got to be happy with that."

The Vikings are 25-8 overall, 11-2 in the Mid-Florida Conference and three games up in the win column on second-place Santa Fe, which beat Seminole State 5-4 in 11 innings on Monday. Central



Florida is 19-12 and 8-5.

Coming off a 14-4 rout of Daytona State College on Saturday, the Vikings rang up 11 hits on their way to a 7-1 lead in the fifth at Central Florida.

"I thought we had really good at-bats. The first five innings, we were really good offensively against their No. 1 guy (Mark Potter, 5-4). Then they brought in a side-armed (Josh Harper) and we only had one hit six through nine," Jones said. "We hit velocity. That's the one thing we do. It's the bad stuff we don't hit. I think it's more mental."

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No. 9 batter Francis Villaman went 3-3 with a double that was the only hit SJR State got off Harper. Nick Romano had two doubles and two RBI in four at-bats. Joey Bellini, Kerry Carpenter and Justin Farmer also went 2-4, Carpenter with a triple

and two RBI. Bellini and Farmer each had one RBI. Ray Gonzalez went 1-3 with an RBI and Joe Gunn knocked in a run.

The Vikings hit six home runs – including three out of the first four batters in the first inning – in Saturday's five-inning beatdown of Daytona State at Tindall Field.

Carpenter hit two, bringing his season total to 11 and pulling him into a tie for first in the state. He's second with a .462 batting average that doesn't include the Central

Florida game.

Bellini, Farmer, Gonzalez and Villaman also homered on Saturday and Riley Wash had three doubles. Gunn was 2-2 with three runs. Farmer and Carpenter were both 2-4, Gonzalez 2-2. Pablo Cedenos' two-run single in the fifth brought the game to a halt on the 10-run rule.

"The 12-inning game on Friday (a 5-4 St. Johns win) hurt them because their best reliever went five innings and they're not very

deep on the mound," Jones said. "We knew all we needed to do was get into their bullpen and we did that in the first inning."

Elijah Gill (6-1) pitched all five innings for the Vikings, striking out six, walking none and allowing seven hits.

"Elijah Gill continues to get better and better," Jones said.

The Vikings are home Wednesday evening for their second game in the Central Florida series.