

SPORTS

Vikings finish with two losses, but sense of pride

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Out of the state tournament for the first time in six years, the St. Johns River State College baseball team finished its season Saturday with a couple of losses at Chipola College, where other teams were tuning up for their state tournaments.

The Vikings lost 5-2 to Tallahassee CC, then 5-4 in nine innings to Wallace CC-Dothan of Alabama. Both games were scheduled for seven innings.

Despite the defeats, which capped a 32-18 season, there was a measure of pride on the ride home for a team that had seemingly little incentive in Marianna after having been eliminated from the Mid-Florida Conference Tournament April 27 with a 13-2 loss to Lake-Sumter State.

"I was really proud of the guys," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "We had a great week of practice. Yeah, we were disappointed (after the Lake-Sumter game), but nobody

wanted to go out like that. We competed our butts off.

"Saturday was two really good games. I thought we pitched well and defended the field well."

The Vikings, who beat Panhandle Conference champion Chipola 4-2 on Friday, found themselves down 3-0 to Tallahassee after three innings Saturday afternoon. They put up single runs in the top of the fifth and sixth innings, only to be matched by the Eagles in the bottom halves.

The loss went to the first of three

pitchers, Darin Kilfoyl (4-4), who struck out five and walked none but allowed four runs on seven hits over four and two-third innings. Jagger McCoy and Luke Sutko each got two outs.

Riley Wash hit a solo home run and Nick Romano went 2-4 with a double in a nine-hit offense for St. Johns. Raymond Gonzalez was 2-3, Joey Bellini 2-4. Justin Farmer and Pablo Cedeno both singled.

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LSU signee Jonathan Gettys was overwhelming the first four innings of the second game, striking out 11 while allowing two runs on two hits, but both Wallace-Dothan and St. Johns went through five pitchers before the 5-4 Wallace win was settled.

"The funny thing is, we got all three schools' No. 1 (starters)," Jones said. "Dothan's No. 1 has got a hammer for a breaking ball. He might be the best pitcher we've faced all year."

The Vikings scored two runs in the bottom of the sixth to force extra innings before the Alabama team broke a 4-4 tie with a run in the ninth off Zach Blankenship (2-1), who struck out four in three innings.

"(Starter) Cameron Sereda pitched well. Zach Blankenship pitched as well as he has all year," Jones said.

Wash went 2-4 with a double and three RBI. Carpenter was 2-4 with a double and finished the season with a state-best .434 batting average, though Chipola's Edmond Americain (.424) could pass him if he is hot at the state tournament.

Bellini was 2-5 with a double and Cedeno had a double in his only at-bat.
