

SPORTS

All-state, academic All-American honors for two Vikings



CHRIS DEVITTO / Palatka Daily News

SJR State's Kerry Carpenter won the state batting title at .433 this season.

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They were leaders in every sense, statistically and academically.

The state noticed Kerry Carpenter and Joey Bellini this spring. So did the country.

The St. Johns River State College baseball players have been voted to the all-state teams and have earned NJCAA academic All-American honors with 4.0 grade-point averages to go with their achievements on the field.

Both players were sophomores in 2018.

Carpenter won the state batting title at .433 this season and tied for second with 14 home runs. The right fielder from Eustis High School had 56 RBI, 19 doubles, a .758 slugging percentage

and a .511 on-base percentage on his way to first-team honors. He played in all 50 games for the Vikings, who went 32-18 and finished third in the Mid-Florida Conference.

A second baseman who batted leadoff the first two-thirds of the season, Bellini was a .377 hitter with three home runs and 25 RBI, making the all-state second team. He led SJR State with 207 at-bats. Bellini had 78 hits, second on the squad only to Carpenter, collecting eight doubles and finishing with a .432 on-base percentage.

"The first thing that comes to mind is what incredible young men they were," said St. Johns head coach and athletic director Ross Jones. "It's a phenomenal thing – our all-staters are academic All-Americans. These are the kind of people you're looking for in recruiting."

The honors may not be over for Carpenter.

"I would be shocked if Carp is not an All-American," Jones said.

Carpenter has signed with Virginia Tech and while he is likely to be selected in next month's Major League Draft, Jones believes it would take a lot to get him away from the Hokies.

"It's the money thing," he said. "Academics are very important to him and his family. He's going to have to be paid an awful lot of money to walk away from an education at Virginia Tech."

Bellini has visited Western Kentucky and Stetson. Having transferred to SJR State between semesters, he is behind Carpenter and other Viking sophomores in the transition to a four-year school, according to Jones.

"He probably won't make a decision until mid-June," the coach said.