

SPORTS

Vikings record 16 strikeouts, improve to 7-0

Capital City Bank Classic begins Thursday night

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Five St. Johns River State College pitchers combined for 16 strikeouts and Polk State committed seven errors as the Vikings extended their season-opening win streak to seven in a 9-5 contest Tuesday night at Tindall Field.

SJR State had just six hits, but turned three walks, two errors, a sacrifice fly by Jorge Ramirez and singles by Francis Villaman and Nick Romano into a six-run fourth inning for an 8-2 lead. The Eagles (5-3) got three runs

back on Brady Gulakowski's fifth-inning home run, but Austin Elliott and Connor Centalla got the last 13 outs – 10 by strikeout – and the Vikings cruised home.

“They scored three runs on a home run on a breaking ball down in the zone. The (pitching) mistake wasn't the home run. It was the two walks in front of it,” said St. Johns coach Ross Jones. “We struck out 16 guys. You strike out 16, you don't have to play a lot of defense. Our pitching from the fifth inning on was outstanding.”

The win went to the Vikings' second pitcher, Stephen Halstead (2-0). A North Carolina State transfer making

his first appearance for SJR State, Centalla struck out five the last two innings to get the save.

Romano was 2-3 with a solo home run and three RBI. Villaman was 2-4 with one RBI. Michael Rosario was 1-2, Luke Belanger 1-4, Belanger with an RBI. Ramirez was 0-3 but had two RBI. Langston Provitt had one RBI.

Having jumped from fourth to seventh in the just-released state poll, the Vikings open the Capital City Bank Classic at Tindall Field Thursday against Northwest Florida State. The four-day event also includes Miami Dade, Broward, Gulf Coast and South Carolina's Florence Darlington Tech.