

# SPORTS

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## Vikings absorb first loss

Northwest Florida wins in 10;  
Capital City Bank Classic continues  
with four games today

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In an early hole against a flame-throwing pitcher who brought the scouts out to Tindall Field, the St. Johns River State College baseball team battled back against Northwest Florida State.

But then, so did Northwest Florida.

The Raiders answered Michael Rosario's monstrous, game-tying homer in the ninth with two runs in the 10th for a 5-3 victory over the Vikings in the first game of the Capital City Bank Classic on Thursday.

It was the first loss after a season-opening, seven-game win streak for SJR State, which plays Broward contest in the 6:30 p.m. finale of four games on tap for today. Northwest Florida improved to 4-3.

A week removed from pitching the first six innings of a seven-inning no-hitter in his SJR State debut, Anthony Simonelli gave up three runs on six hits over the first three innings but settled down and along with Evan Waterbor, didn't allow another runner as far as second base until the fateful 10th.

A 3-0 hole after three innings looked awfully deep against Raiders starter Thomas Farr, the target of at least a half-dozen radar guns. He struck out nine before stepping aside in the seventh, having allowed two runs on five hits.

"We're down three going against a big-time arm. He was touching 95 (miles per hour) in the first inning. He kept us off balance," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "It was a great ball game and our guys competed well. You play 55 games, you're going to be in a lot of games like this."

The Vikings began to scratch their way back after Langston Provitt singled to start the fourth. He took second on Francis Villaman's groundout and scored on a two-out single to left from Rosario, who would go 2-4 with the ninth-inning homer and two RBI.

A.J. Mathis hustled his way to a bloop double to lead off the St. Johns sixth. Villaman got him home on a two-out single to left, bringing the Vikings within 3-2. He stole second, only to be caught trying for third as Rosario drew a base on balls. Villaman told Jones afterward he thought the ball had gotten away from the Northwest Florida catcher.

## Vikings

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It was a new game in the bottom of the ninth when Rosario sent the first pitch out deep to right. The Vikings loaded the bases on a walk to Garrett Shephard, a pinch-hit single by Bubba Sangster and a pitch that grazed Mathis' jersey before Raider reliever Jacob Kush (1-1) escaped on a fly ball caught in foul territory in right.

No. 9 batter Blaine Smith singled to start the Northwest Florida 10th. He got to second on

a Kaden Polcovich bunt and scored the go-ahead run when Mickey Madeg doubled to right. Madeg sped to third when the ball was bobbled and scored on a single by Kyle Fitzgerald. SJR State couldn't get anything going in the home half.

Waterbor (0-1) took the loss. Luke Sutko got the last out in the 10th.

Mathis, Provitt, Villaman, Sangster and Riley Wash all singled to complement Rosario in a seven-hit offense. Jones rested power hitters Garrett Blaylock and Nick Romano, each with back problems. He does not expect Romano to play in the Classic.

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