

SPORTS

Vikings drop Saturday and Sunday games in Capital City Bank Classic

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The second of three February baseball classics hosted by St. Johns River State College didn't go so well for the Vikings.

But maybe it helped a team that entered the Capital

City Bank Classic undefeated but exited 8-3, having dropped three of four, including games of 4-2 on Saturday to Miami Dade and 12-11 in 10 innings on Sunday to Florence-Darlington Tech of South Carolina. The Vikings had allowed more than four runs only once before Sunday, but not only saw a four-run lead evaporate against the Stingers, they failed to score a winning run with the bases loaded and nobody out in

the ninth.

"In a weekend like this, the biggest thing you take away is we've got a list of things to work on," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "We had a chance to win (Sunday) even though we didn't deserve it. Three hit batters to start the ninth, we get a hit, the winning run's

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on third with nobody out and we don't get him in."

The Vikings went to the bottom of the ninth down 11-9, FDT having scored two runs in the top half off three straight walks, an unsuccessful double play attempt and a failed pickoff. St. Johns went to the home half with its 7-8-9 batters due and all three – pinch-hitter Ryan Romano, Chase Malloy and Ray Gonzalez – were hit by pitches. Sandon Witt's two-run single tied the game, but Langston Provitt's fly to left wasn't deep enough to score Gonzalez and Bryce Kobleur (1-0) escaped with a strikeout and a pop fly.

The Stingers went up 12-11 in the 10th when Hunter Baker singled, stole second and took third on an error, then scored on a wild pitch by Luke Sutko (0-1). SJR State went in order in the bottom half.

The Vikings appeared to be sailing with a 9-5 lead after six, but gave up four runs in the seventh on three hits, a misplayed sacrifice bunt and a pair of RBI groundouts.

"Our bunt defense cost us two runs, we don't turn a double play, we walk nine guys and our catchers' accuracy to second had got to get better," Jones said. "We were sloppy in every phase. We're not good enough to throw our gloves out there (and win)."

Jones was pleased with the

work of reliever Stephen Halstead, who took over with two out in the second and struck out five in four innings, walking one and allowing one earned run on two hits.

Francis Villaman was 3-4, Gonzalez homered and Witt and Garrett Blaylock delivered two-run singles in a nine-hit offense for St., Johns. Bubba Sangster was 2-3 and Malloy had an RBI single. Michael Rosario scored three runs.

The Vikings used five pitchers – Rosario, Halstead, Austin Elliott, Evan Waterbor and Sutko.

Miami Dade built a 4-1 lead through three innings of Saturday's seven-inning game and withstood a seventh-inning threat.

The loss was the first after two wins for SJR State starter Jordan Dubberly, who went the first three innings. Connor Centalla pitched the next three, striking out five, walking one and allowing three hits.

Blaylock doubled and Gonzalez went 2-3 in a six-hit offense. The other hits were singles by Provitt, Villaman, and Rosario.

The Vikings are on the road for the first time this season this week – a Wednesday trip to Polk State College, then two at South Georgia State on Friday before a home doubleheader with South Georgia on Sunday.

"We've got three weeks before conference play. We'll get better," Jones said. "We've got to come to work prepared to get better."