

SPORTS

Moody steps into circle, helps SJR State softball gain split

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Going mainly with two pitchers at the start of the season, first-year St. Johns River State College softball coach Marti Littlefield ran into a bind when one of her pitchers, Maddie Tomas, was on concussion protocol for Thursday's make-up doubleheader at South Georgia State.

Enter Kendell Moody, who had some pitching experience at Palatka High School, but it had been a while.

Moody stepped up for four solid innings of one-run ball in the second game of the doubleheader to help the Vikings to a 4-2 win and a split of the twinbill, leaving the Vikings at 6-6.

South Georgia State won the first

game, 1-0, in spite of collecting one hit. In that opener, South Georgia State pitchers Larren Carter and Mary Tillman combined for 14 strikeouts.

But it was Moody who stepped up to give Littlefield a fine outing and a victory. In her four innings, Moody walked one hitter, struck out two and gave up two hits and a run. Amanda Jessel, the hard-luck losing hurler of the first game, went the last three innings for the save, giving up one run on three hits, walking two and striking out three.

"I believe that Kendell had not pitched since her freshman year," Littlefield said. "She came in there and first batter of the game she faces,

she strikes her out. We needed that from her. She gave us those four innings, then Amanda went in and finished it up."

Moody was staked to a 3-0 lead in the top of the first against Carter as Brianna Clapper singled home Kelsea Friend, then Cardejia Talley, who had both hits for the Vikings in the opener, delivered a double to left-center field that scored Harli Phillips and Clapper. The final run the Vikings scored in the nightcap came when Clapper singled home Jaime Valenta.

Clapper was 2-for-3 with a run and two RBI, while Talley, Friend, Reganne McCarl, Jesse Anne Ackerman and Lauryn Markis had one hit each.

In the opening game of the doubleheader, a makeup from Tuesday's rains that wiped it off the schedule, Jessel (2-4) walked one batter, struck out three and gave up a fourth-inning single to Logan Blizzard for South Georgia's only hit. An Amanda Evans sacrifice fly plated Baylee Stewart in the fifth inning with the game's only run.

"The strikeouts killed us in the first game," Littlefield said. "We had two an inning. In the second game, we were more patient and were not chasing the riseball like we were."

The Vikings will head to Melbourne to face off with Eastern Florida State on Sunday in another doubleheader. Starting time is 1 p.m.