

SPORTS

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Simonelli's perfect game highlights St. Johns sweep

Thought to be first Viking with two no-nos in same season

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It wasn't easy, but Anthony Simonelli found a way to improve on the no-hitter for he began in his first start for St. Johns River State College.

Perfection in his third start.

The Coastal Carolina transfer pitched the program's first perfect game in five years, striking out 12 over seven innings as the Vikings completed a doubleheader sweep of South Georgia State with a 4-0 triumph Friday in Douglas, Ga.

Elijah Gill and Connor Centalla combined on a two-hitter at St. Johns took the first game 7-4 in eight innings. The same teams play a 1 p.m. Sunday doubleheader at Tindall Field.

A sophomore from Winchester, Va., who committed to Virginia Tech on Monday, Simonelli (2-0) threw the first six innings of no-hitter against Gulf Coast State on Jan. 31, a 10-0 game that ended in the seventh on the 10-run rule. He did not get the decision in his second start, going six and two-thirds innings in a 5-3 loss to Northwest Florida State that went 10 innings on Feb. 7.

Friday, he pitched the Vikings' first

perfect game since Trae Ratliff and Brad Torres combined for one that went nine innings against Lake-Sumter in 2014. Simonelli is believed to be the first St. Johns pitcher with two no-hitters in the same season. According to retired coach John Tindall, in a four-game sweep of Daytona Beach in 1966, Bill Mansfield pitched a no-hitter and Wayne Rick a

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one-hitter in Daytona Beach, only to have Rick pitch a no-no and Mansfield throw a one-hitter in the rematch in Palatka.

Simonelli had just two three-ball counts Friday.

"He was overpowering with all three pitches," said SJR State coach

Ross Jones. "His stuff was just electric. He was still 90-91 (miles per hour) in the seventh inning. It was as dominant a performance as I've seen in a long time. It made my job easy."

Even so, it was a scoreless game until a two-run sixth. The Vikings scored two more in the seventh, highlighted by Garrett Blaylock's run-scoring triple.

Eight players had one hit apiece for SJR State - Blaylock's triple, a double by Nick Romano, and singles

by A.J. Mathis, Francis Villaman, Michael Rosario, Ray Gonzalez, Jorge Ramirez and Langston Provitt.

The Vikings (10-3) took a 4-3 lead to the seventh inning of the opener before South Georgia (6-5) turned a two-base error, a groundout and a wild pitch into the tying run. Michael Rosario got the Vikings going in the eighth with a double off the wall in right center. Though he was cut down at the plate, SJR State went on to score three runs off a hit batsman,

an error, a safety squeeze by Provitt, an RBI single by Ryan Romano, a passed ball and a wild pitch.

Centalla (1-0) pitched a scoreless eighth for his first win. He took over in the seventh for Gill, who struck out eight, walked four and allowed three runs (one earned) on two hits over six innings.

Riley Wash's home run and doubles by Rosario and Provitt were the big blows in a six-hit Viking offense. Provitt was 2-2 with three RBI.