

SPORTS

Vikings struggle at plate

Splits with NAIA junior varsity
team; Tindall Classic starts Friday

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The St. Johns River State College baseball team struggled at the plate Wednesday – particularly in the second half of a doubleheader with perhaps the weakest team on their schedule – and was left with an unsatisfying split with the NAIA Thomas University junior varsity from Georgia.

The Vikings twice came from behind before winning the opener 9-5, then managed only six hits while dropping the second game, 3-2. The split left them 13-4 heading into this weekend's John Tindall Classic.

"Just a lot of weak outs. We popped out on the infield six times in game two," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "We saw two starting pitchers whose best fastball is 80 (miles per hour). We never made the adjustment.

"It's the warrior mentality. We face guys that's 90-91 and battle all day (two weeks ago against Northwest Florida) and then face a guy who couldn't make our staff and stink it up. We've got to get better offensively."

St. Johns went into Wednesday's doubleheader batting a modest .25 with only four regulars above .280.

Bubba Sangster went 3-4 in this first game, including a three-run homer in the fifth to put the Vikings ahead to stay after Nick Roman doubled and Francis Villama walked. Sangster also had a double in the opener and hit a solo homer in the second game.

Romano was 2-2 with two RBI in the first game. Sandon Witt was 2-3, Ray Gonzalez 2-4. Chase Malloy had a double and an RBI in three at-bats. Villaman also went 1-3.

The win went to SJR State's third pitcher Connor Centalla, who struck out five and allowed two hits over two and two-third scoreless innings. Centalla is 3-0 and has yet to allow an earned run this season.

Working in relief for Thomas, Palatka High grad Austin Langston struggled through the sixth inning of the first game.

Home runs by Sangster and Garrett Blaylock accounted for St. Johns' scoring in the second game. Down 3-2 after Sangster's second shot of the day opened the seventh inning, the Vikings couldn't get anything else going.

Their other hits were all singles, one each by Gonzalez, Witt, Jorge Ramirez and Ryan Romano.

The third of five pitchers, Jackson Spiller (0-1) took the loss.

The Vikings open Tindall Classic play at noon Friday against Hillsborough Community College.