

# SPORTS

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## Wash, Villaman each homer twice as Vikings take down Tallahassee

Final tuneup before conference play begins on Saturday

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They're as ready as they can be. St. Johns River State College hit four homers and three doubles, played error-free defense and had six pitchers combine for a dozen strikeouts in a 9-1 rout of Tallahassee Community College in the Vikings' final tuneup for Mid-Florida Conference play Thursday night at Tindall Field.

The game had a bit of a spring training feel with the pre-planned use of six pitchers and liberal substitution elsewhere, but St. Johns (15-6) played with the sort of intensity coach Ross Jones wanted before going to work in an MFC that looks tougher than ever.

"We played our best game of the year. We minimized mistakes, had good, competitive at-bats and pitched very well," said Jones, whose club hosts Lake-Sumter State in the conference opener on Saturday. "We're playing our best baseball right now going into conference. It gets here so fast!"

The LakeHawks are a modest 10-10-1 but have won three straight and took the regular-season series from SJR State

last season, then run-ruled the Vikings out of the MFC tournament.

And that's only the beginning.

The MFC has four of the top seven teams in the latest state coaches poll – No. 1 Central Florida, No. 3 Seminole State, No. 5 Santa Fe and No. 7 St. Johns. But the Vikings need not flinch if they play as well as they did against the Eagles (12-8).

No. 9 batter Riley Wash and Francis Villaman each homered twice and had three RBI. Wash had a solo shot in the third inning and a two-run homer in the fourth. Villaman had solo homers in the fourth and sixth and a run-scoring sacrifice fly that almost left the park in the eighth.

"Riley Wash, what a night he had. We've spent 10 days working on Villaman's swing and look what he did," Jones said.

Ray Gonzalez was 2-4 with a double and two RBI. Doubles by Michael Rosario and Garrett Blaylock and singles by Nick Romano and Langston Provitt rounded out a 10-hit offense that left only two runners on base.

The Vikings never trailed, scratching out a run in the second. Gonzalez beat out an infield hit, stole second, took third on a wild pitch and hustled home on a double steal in which Blaylock gave himself up between first and second. That looked big in what was shaping up as a pitchers' duel, but the St. Johns

longball parade was soon to follow.

The win went to starter Stephen Halstead (3-0), who was followed on the mound by Jackson Spiller, Evan Waterbor, Austin Elliott, Luke Sutko and Conner Centalla. They combined for a dozen strikeouts – Centalla had three in his only inning – and held Tallahassee to six singles.

"We wanted to have everyone ready to go," said Jones, who is starting Anthony Simonelli Saturday and Elijah Gill Monday in the first two games of the three-game Lake-Sumter series. "I wanted to keep everyone between 20-25 pitches. Evan Waterbor threw 31, then I gave the last three one inning each. We got the game started under control."