

SPORTS

Lucky 13



Photos by FRAN RUCHALSKI / Palatka Daily News

Above: SJR State's Elijah Gill struck out 13 in six innings Monday night. Below: Francis Villaman steals second base.

Vikings Count to 18

St. Johns strikes out 18 in victory over team that had 15 hits two days earlier

By **ANDY HALL**

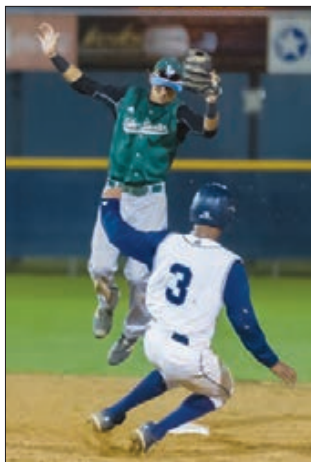
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Eighteen strikeouts make a lot of things easy, even when the opponent is gritty Lake-Sumter State College.

Two days after the LakeHawks peppered St. Johns River State College for a dozen runs on 15 hits – all singles – Elijah Gill and Connor Centalla combined for 18 strikeouts as the Vikings turned back Lake-Sumter 5-2 on a cool Monday night at Tindall Field.

A sophomore lefthander, Gill (3-0) struck out 13 over six innings and had a no-hitter in the works until Seth Martin's leadoff single in the seventh. Centalla took it from there, striking out five over three innings to pick up his second save.

It was a needed comeback for St. Johns, which coughed up nine runs in the fifth inning of



Saturday's 12-4 home loss to the LakeHawks. Monday's win left SJR State 16-7 overall and 1-1 in the Mid-Florida Conference. Lake-Sumter is 12-11-1 and 1-1.

"You punch out 18 and you've got to make plays on nine guys. Pitching was the story tonight," said SJR State coach Ross Jones.

"Elijah had a hiccup in the fourth and walked a couple guys (one of which scored on a wild pitch). Take two hitters away and he was really good. Connor was, too."

St. Johns made the most out of its six hits on a night its No. 2-6 batters were a combined 1-18. Ryan Romano's two-out double in the second scored Bubba Sangster and Ray Gonzalez as the Vikings broke in top. Twice Langston Provitt delivered, two-out RBI hits – a two-run single in the sixth inning and a one-run single in the eighth.

"We've still got to be better offensively. We got some timely hits," Jones said. "(The middle of the order) hit a few balls hard.

The leadoff man, Provitt finished 2-4 with three RBI. Batting ninth, Romano was 2-4 with two RBI. The other St. Johns hits were singles by Francis Villaman and Garrett Blaylock.

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Vikings

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By contrast, the middle of the order delivered three straight home runs on Saturday – third-inning shots by Nick Romano, Villaman

and Sangster for a 4-3 lead on the LakeHawks, who came out swinging but appeared to be cooling off with SJR State starter Anthony Simonelli was settling down.

Not so. Lake-Sumter scored nine runs in the fifth, putting six singles with three walks, three errors and a hit batsman. The game was halted

after seven innings by rain.

"We gave them six outs and our pitchers didn't make pitches," Jones said. "I don't know how to survive three errors, three walks and a hit batsman."

It was an uncharacteristically rough start for Simonelli (2-1), whose two victories this season are

a no-hitter and a perfect game. He didn't get out of the nightmarish fifth and three relievers fared little better.

Nick Romano was 3-4, Gonzalez 2-3 in an eight-hit offense that also included the Villaman and Sangster home runs and a single by Sandon Witt.