

SPORTS

www.palatkadailynews.com

TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2019

B SECTION

Vikings run to victory they needed

Six stolen bases critical in 5-3 conference contest vs. Seminole

By ANDY HALL

Palatka Daily News
ahall@palatkadailynews.com

Badly in need of a win after being rocked in its last two games, the St. Johns River State College baseball team literally stepped it up Monday afternoon.

The Vikings stole six bases and got steady pitching after its top two starters had taken beatings and went on to a 5-3 victory at Seminole State College, keeping themselves in the thick of highly competitive Mid-Florida Conference.

St. Johns never trailed, scoring three runs the first two innings and getting a tiebreaking single in the eighth from Ray Gonzalez while improving to 17-0 overall and 2-3 in the conference. The Raiders, who blistered SJR State 11-0 on Saturday at Tindall Field, are 19-0 and 3-3. Only two series into the season, every MFC team has at least two losses with Central Florida (25-3, 4-2) leading the pack.

"The whole thing's wide open. Everyone's bunched together," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "(Monday) was important to win after getting shellacked two games. Seminole's playing its best baseball right now and we're coming out of our worst performances of the year."

The state's strikeout leader, Elijah Gill served up three home runs and took his first loss of the season on Saturday. Despite two no-hitters on his resume for 2019, Anthony Simonel didn't get out of the first inning of a 11-2 loss to Seminole the day before Monday's win was equal parts Jorda Dubberly and relievers Steve Halstead and Connor Centalla according to Jones.

"I'm going to have to come back with Dubberly on Saturday, so I told him I was going to have him on a short leash and he understood. Halstead and Centalla have been our best guys out of the bullpen. All three pitched well," Jones said.

He also praised the defense, taking particular note of third baseman Luke Belanger's play on a drag bunt in the ninth inning.

Dubberly pitched the first four innings, handing a 3-2 lead to Halstead. Centalla (4-1) came on in the seventh and picked up the win.

See **VIKINGS**, Page 3B

Vikings

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

The Vikings managed a modest six hits, but augmented them with six stolen bases, all from different players.

Ryan Romano and Gonzalez pulled off a double steal on which Gonzalez scored in the second inning. Romano subsequently came in on a two-out single by Langston Provitt.

Nick Romano was 1-2 with a

double and two RBI. Provitt, Gonzalez, Ryan Romano, Francis Villaman and Michael Rosario had one hit apiece.

The Raiders hit four home runs Saturday, three off Gill (3-1) before the hook came out in the fifth inning. The game ended after seven innings.

Nick Romano and Ryan Romano each went 2-3 in an eight-hit offense for St. Johns. Villaman, Garrett Blaylock, Bubba Sangster and A.J. Mathis had the other hits, all singles.

The Vikings host Daytona State Wednesday afternoon.