

SPORTS

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Vikings complete sweep of Daytona, enter rough stretch

Santa Fe and Central Florida on horizon after win Saturday

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There's a rough stretch ahead for the St. Johns River State College baseball team.

After Monday's welcome open date comes a three-game series with two-time defending Mid-Florida Conference champion Santa Fe, then three against the current MFC leader, Central Florida, which began the week 28-3 overall and ranked second in the state.

That's why Saturday was a big deal for the Vikings.

They completed a three-game sweep of Daytona State and ran their win streak to four with a 6-2 victory, playing some of their sharpest baseball of the

season after stumbling through series against Lake-Sumter and Seminole. They're 20-9 overall and at 5-3 in the league, a game and a half behind Central Florida.

"We played well this week," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "To be a champion in this league, you've got to put together some win streaks and sweep people. We're going into a tough stretch and we need to go into it with the same approach we had this week."

The Vikings did pretty much everything right on Saturday but were particularly strong on the mound.

Jordan Dubberly struck out eight, walked one and allowed two runs on six hits over seven innings while improving to 3-1. He struggled only in the third, when the Falcons started with four straight hits – only one of which left the infield – but were held to two runs as Dubberly escaped with a ground ball and a strikeout. Stephen Halstead faced



ANDY HALL / Palatka Daily News

Former Palatka High pitcher Mason Sharp took the loss for Daytona State Saturday against SJR State.

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the minimum over the last two innings, helped along with a double play in the eighth.

"Jordan Dubberly pitched really well. His last three or four starts, he's thrown it about as good as you can pitch," Jones said. "He had 92 pitches and didn't want to come out. He was cruising. Our starting pitching has been so good – (Anthony) Simonelli pitches seven innings Wednesday, Elijah Gill pitches a complete game Friday – but I

needed to get Stephen some innings."

Down 2-1 after Dubberly's shaky third inning, the Vikings went to work in the home half against former Palatka High pitcher Mason Sharp.

They began with consecutive singles by Sandon Witt, Langston Provitt and Ryan Romano and the hook came out for Sharp (0-2) after he walked Nick Romano to make it 2-2, the bases still loaded. St. Johns was ahead 5-2 before Zach Henderson could get Daytona (14-13, 3-6) out of the inning, walking home Provitt and surrendering a two-run single to Bubba Sangster.

Ryan Romano's RBI single in the fourth got Provitt home and completed the scoring for the day. St. Johns scored its first run in the second inning as Michael Rosario singled, Sangster doubled and Ray Gonzalez got Rosario home on a groundout.

"The lefthander they brought in (after Henderson) was pretty effective. We made too many easy out. Our approach against their starter and their second guy was better," Jones said.

The Vikings finished with 10 hits, getting 3-4 performances out of their 1-2 batters, Provitt and Ryan Romano. Sangster was 2-3 with a double and two RBI.