

Vikings fall in 9th inning vs. Santa Fe

Loss ends SJRSC 4-game win streak

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St. Johns River State College baseball coach Ross Jones is still trying to figure out which team he has on the field.

"I told the guys, 'How do you play for a week the way you did, then stink it up (Wednesday),' Jones said. 'We've got to figure out exactly who we are. This team can't find its identity.'"

After running off four straight wins last week, including a sweep of Daytona State College, that moved the Vikings back into the top five in the latest state Division I junior college poll, the Vikings took a step back in Gainesville, losing to Santa Fe College, 6-5, in a Mid-Florida Conference matchup as the Saints (21-11 overall, 2-5 in conference) scored twice in the bottom of the ninth inning to get the victory. The loss ended SJRSC's four-game winning streak.

The rally started on a controversial play. Cade Westbrook hit a ball off the bat that was called foul by the home plate umpire, according to Jones, but Westbrook ran it out without any Vikings players reacting. After conferring with the other umpire, the ruling was changed to a fair ball and Westbrook was allowed to have first base.

"I mean, our pitcher (losing reliever Connor Centala) was standing there on the mound because it was originally called a foul," Jones said. "Total blown call."

One out later, Zach Hand singled to move Westbrook to second. Cale Jones then walked on four pitches to load the bases for Parker Biederer, who delivered a single to left field to bring in Westbrook to make it 5-all. That brought up Jarrod Cande, who hit a groundball to shortstop Francis Villaman. The ball took a bad hop on Villaman and though he did all he could to put a glove on it, an error was called, allowing Hand to score the winning run.

Happy Hokies



GREG OYSTER / Special To The Daily News

Virginia Tech's Nick Owens (8) and Kerry Carpenter pose for a picture before a recent game against Florida State when FSU coach Mike Martin won his 2,000th career game. Both Owens and Carpenter played junior college baseball at St. Johns River State College.

"That's a play (Villaman) has got to make," Jones said. "Instead of coming after the ball, he let it play him."

In the loss, Chase Malloy, who came in for an injured Ryan Romano, was 3-for-4 with two RBI, while Jorge Ramirez was 3-for-5. Langston Provitt went 2-for-3 with two stolen bases and two runs scored, and Villaman, Michael Rosario, Romano and Nick Romano all had one hit each.

The Vikings (20-10, 5-4) did not help their cause with three errors and leaving 13 runners on base, including nine in scoring position.

"These guys think they're playing good ball and when a loss like this takes place, someone points out that Central Florida (the current No. 1 team in the state poll) lost, too," Jones said. "Who cares what (Central Florida) does? It's about what you do. What about what you do? That's got to be the focus."

Jones said he will throw left-hander Elijah Gill in Friday's home game with Santa Fe, the second of a three-game set with the Saints.