

SJR State Baseball



Photos by ANDY HALL / Palatka Daily News

Above: SJR State's Chase Malloy steals second in Saturday's game with FSC-Jacksonville. Below, Garrett Blaylock's two-run single helped the Vikings overtake the Blue Wave.

Race, Relievers in Form

Bullpen holds FSC-Jacksonville scoreless in two wins as Vikings make MFC push

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Just as the Mid-Florida Conference race is taking shape, so is the St. Johns River State College bullpen.

SJR State relievers threw eight and a third scoreless innings against Florida State College-Jacksonville in victories of 8-3 Saturday at Tindall Field and 5-1 Monday in Jacksonville as the Vikings ran their win streak to five and improved to 27-13 overall and 9-7 in the conference.

Central Florida (37-6, 13-5) remains in first with Seminole (31-10, 11-6), Santa Fe (29-13, 10-7) and St. Johns bunched tightly behind. The regular-season champion is assured a state tournament



berth and the second-, third- and fourth-place teams play a tournament to decide the other slot from the MFC. The Vikings can solidify their tournament status, if not overtake Central Florida, by beating

FSCJ in their series finale at home Wednesday, and taking two Friday at Lake-Sumter, where they complete a 5-5 game suspended by

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darkness in the 13th inning last month, followed by the regularly scheduled contest.

"If we can get the next three decisions, we've got a fighting chance. These next few days are really important," said SJR State coach Ross Jones.

Good thing for the Vikings, then, that the relievers are coming around, complemented by solid starting pitching and errorless defense in the last two games.

"The relief pitching has been really, really good. Our bullpen is settling in on some roles. Pitching and defense has been the key," Jones said.

Anthony Simonelli (4-2) got the win Monday, striking out five, walking one and allowing one run on four hits over the first five innings. It was his first start in two weeks, so Jones limited his work and let Jackson Spiller,

Stephen Halstead, Evan Waterbor and Luke Sutko finish the job.

"We tried to match up. All five guys threw well," Jones said. "Simonelli had a good day. He's gone through a dead arm. It was good to have him back."

SJR State banged out 14 hits against three Blue Wave pitchers, but only led 2-1 through sixth. There was nobody on in the seventh before the Vikings' Garrett Blaylock drew a two-out walk, raced from first to third on Garrett Sheppard's single and scored on a wild pitch. Langston Provitt and Ryan Romano singled to open the eighth, Ray Gonzalez drew a two-out walk and a hit batsman and a walk forced two runs home.

Sheppard was 3-4 with a double, Provitt and Nick Romano both 3-5. Michael Rosario was 2-4 with one RBI. Gonzalez and Chase Malloy had one hit apiece.

"We hit a lot of balls hard. We could have scored 15 runs," Jones said. "They got a lot of breaks. They played really well, too. It was a well-played college baseball game."

The Blue Wave broke on top 3-0 on Saturday, but Blaylock's two-run, two-out single highlighted a four-run third as St Johns went ahead to stay.

Provitt hit a solo home run in the fourth and the Vikings added three in the sixth off RBI singles by Rosario and Gonzalez and a sacrifice fly by Nick Romano.

Provitt finished 3-4. Francis Villaman doubled and Gonzalez, Malloy, Rosario, Blaylock and Ryan Romano all singled.

Elijah Gill struggled through the first three innings before settling down for his team-high sixth win. He struck out four, walked two and allowed three earned runs before giving way to Sutko with two out in the sixth. Spiller came on in the seventh and Connor Centalla got the last two outs in the ninth.

"Gill wasn't quite as sharp as usual, especially the first three innings. He was a little rusty," Jones said.

As No. 3 starter Jordan Dubberly recovered from shoulder trouble, Darin Kilyfoyl will get the start Wednesday against FSCJ.