

SPORTS

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Vikings win, host Central Florida in conference finale

St. Johns trying to nail down bye for tourney deciding state berth

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This much is certain in Mid-Florida Conference baseball as the season comes down to its final day: Central Florida is the champion and is headed for state.

It will take most of the next week to determine who is going with the Patriots. It could even take a while to shake out conference tournament seeding tonight.

St. Johns River State College did its best to keep things interesting Monday, sailing to a 10-1 road win over last-place Florida State College-Jacksonville to forge a three-way tie for second with Seminole and Santa Fe, which survived one-run scares with Daytona State and Lake-Sumter, respectively.

SJR State (33-14, 15-8) hosts Central Florida (41-7, 17-6) tonight. Seminole (35-13, 15-8) goes to Santa Fe (34-14, 15-8) this afternoon. The Vikings are gunning for the second seed, which would give them a first-round MFC tournament bye and

home field for a best-of-three series with Seminole or Santa Fe, but it was not immediately clear after Monday's game which scenario would produce the desired result.

St. Johns coach Ross Jones is only certain of the need to beat Central Florida while saving pitching for the tournament, which begins with the 3-4 game on Friday.

"We'll, throw Johnny Wholestaff. We'll do what we have to do, but they've all got to be ready for the weekend," said Jones, who will open with Anthony Simonelli (4-3) against the Patriots.

Pretty much everyone is available

tonight except Jordan Dubberly (6-1), who got the win Monday with five and a third innings over which he allowed one run on three hits, striking out four and walking two in his first start since March 25. Stephen Halstead finished a game that was over after seven via the mercy rule.

Nick Romano's two-run homer in the first got the Vikings going in a game in which they scored in every inning but the fifth. They collected 13 hits and had five stolen bases, three by Langston Provitt.

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"We had scoring opportunities in every inning and took advantage of it. No win is ever easy, but the guys took care of business," Jones said.

Provitt finished 3-4 with a double and an RBI. Romano, Michael Rosario and Francis Villaman were all 2-4, Romano with the home run and three RBI, Rosario with one RBI. Ryan Romano was 2-5 with a double and two RBI. A.J. Mathis had a double and two RBI and Chase Malloy singled.

Jones didn't need to give his players a postgame pep talk about tonight's task.

"There's not a lot of motivation going on right now. The guys know what they're playing for," he said.