

SPORTS

Vikings sweep to share of first Sun-Lakes title

First St. Johns women's team to place first in conference

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A campaign that began in a city of dreams is turning into a season of dreams for the St. Johns River State College volleyball team.

The expected became the unprecedented Wednesday in Lake City, where the Vikings swept last-place Florida Gateway 25-11, 25-20, 25-14

to clinch at least a share of the Division II Sun-Lakes Conference championship – becoming the first St. Johns women's team to do so in any sport.

A team that opened its season by splitting four matches against tough competition in Las Vegas now stands 19-7 overall and 8-2 in the conference. The Vikings would win the title outright should Gulf Coast lose one of its remaining home matches this weekend against South Florida or Pasco-Hernando. If the Commodores win

out, they'll share first with the Vikings but have the No. 1 seed in the Sun-Lakes tournament in Avon Park Nov. 2-3 by virtue of the set they won off SJR State in a 3-1 defeat Sept. 25. Gulf Coast took St. Johns 3-0 last Saturday.

Come what may, the Vikings have made school history, though any celebration after Wednesday's match was muted.

"I don't know how well-versed they are in the history of the program," said St. Johns coach Matt Cohen, whose sophomores have a school-re-

cord 41 wins over two seasons. "I've mentioned it in passing, but we're trying to set a new standard and culture here. Now we've got to sit back and see what happens (with Gulf Coast). We just happened to be the first school to finish their conference schedule."

It was enough for Cohen on Wednesday to win in straight sets, albeit over a team that's 0-9 in the league.

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"We've talked all year about winning on the road is tough in our conference," he said. "We played well at times. We played with the lineup a little bit. I was happy. It's

always nice to have an efficient win."

Beaten badly in the first set, Gateway showed some energy by jumping out to a 9-4 lead in the second before Cohen called a time out. Libero Dariana Luna went on a good serving run from there and the Vikings were in control the rest of the way.

Luna also had 24 digs, "which for

three games is impressive," Cohen said.

Brooklyn McLeod had 11 kills and two blocks for SJR State, Jordyn Pruski 29 assists and 10 digs. Kendal Hoges and Louisa Marunde each had eight kills.

The Vikings remain in the NJCAA rankings for the third straight week – back-to-back turns

at No. 15 after breaking in at 18th. They have three more matches before the conference tournament, traveling Tuesday for a date with Division I Florida State College-Jacksonville.

"They beat us in four games in our gym, so we're excited to get another chance to play them," Cohen said.