

SPORTS

Vikings win last two, 2-seed in conference

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St. Johns River State College volleyball coach Matt Cohen admits he likes where his team is at this point of the season.

"It's where we're supposed to be," Cohen said. "We're as healthy as we've been all year and our practices have been fantastic. And we were just really good this weekend."

Good as in sweeping two opponents at the South Carolina-Salkehatchie college campus to finish the regular season with a 21-8 mark, heading into the postseason with the NJCAA Division II Region 8/Sun-Lakes Conference Tournament starting Saturday at South Florida State College in Avon Park.

The Vikings go in after taking out the host team, 25-13, 25-12, 25-16, then beating Surry (N.C.) College on Saturday, 25-9, 25-9, 25-13. In the win against the hosts Friday, Louisa Marunde had nine kills and two digs, Eden Edgell recorded eight kills, an ace, an assist and two digs, Dariana Luna added five service aces, two assists and 11 digs, and Jordyn Pruski handed out 18 assists and came up with four service aces, while scraping for six digs. In Saturday's win, Rickie Sheets had a huge day with 13 kills, three digs and an assist, Pruski handed out 17 assists and had six service aces and Luna had eight service aces, four assists and 13 digs.

The Vikings came up with 37 service aces in the victories.

Next is Saturday's semifinal of the tournament against third-seeded Lake-Sumter or sixth-seeded Florida Gateway. The Vikings won a share of the conference regular-season title with Gulf Coast State, but lost out on the overall No. 1 seed by losing one more set to Gulf Coast in splitting conference matchups with the Commodores this season. The Vikings will play their semifinal at 7 p.m. Saturday at South Florida State. If they win, they will play for the conference championship at 1 p.m. Sunday.

And if the Vikings can win the conference tournament, they will travel to Charleston, W.Va. for the NJCAA Division II tournament starting Nov. 21.

"Right now, I think the girls are just motivated to advance closer to the national tournament," said Cohen, whose Vikings were 22-11 last year and lost a five-set heartbreaker to eventual conference champion Lake-Sumter after winning the first two sets in the semifinal matchup. "They want to make history and if they are focused on one particular team, that will get in the way of what they want to do. They just want to win one match on Saturday and then one more on Sunday, regardless of who it is."