

SPORTS



PAULA HARRIS / SJR State photo

SJR State first baseman Breanna Cefaliello looks to throw after fielding a bunt. The catcher is Madison Houtz.

St. Johns softball sweeps

Pulls away late in opener, breezes in second game vs. ABAC

Palatka Daily News

St. Johns River State College softball coach Marti Littlefield had every reason to celebrate Tuesday night.

"Oh my gosh, it feels like the start of a very productive season," Littlefield said out in downtown Palatka by phone after her Vikings completed the first doubleheader sweep in her one-plus season as the program's head coach. The Vikings downed Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, 9-3, in the first game, then took the nightcap in five innings, 8-0, to improve to 3-3 for the year.

"I liked how they took pride in representing St. Johns River in how they played from start to finish," Littlefield said. "They worked hard as a team and our offense was timely. We were getting

hits that were beneficial to us in the outcome."

Both teams were tied at 3-all in the first game going to the bottom of the sixth inning. Kaylee Anthony started the inning with a single, followed by a Madison McAllister single. An error on a Soraya Hernandez groundball loaded the bases. An error off a Brealyn Holley grounder scored the go-ahead run. It got to 5-3 before Ashley Kirkbride crushed a three-run home run to give the Vikings an 8-3 lead. Right after that, Breanna Cefaliello drilled a solo home run to finish out the six-run frame.

Kirkbride was 2-for-4 with two runs and four RBI, Madison Houtz was 2-for-4 with an RBI, Cefaliello was 2-for-4 with a run and an RBI and Araya Williams, Antony, McAllister and Holley had one hit apiece in the opener. Winning pitcher Amanda Jessel walked three, struck out

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11 and gave up seven hits.

In the second game, winning pitcher Kathleen Ingram walked four and struck out three in four innings of work. Houtz, Williams, Anthony and Holley all went 2-for-3 with a combined three runs scored and three RBI. Kirkbride had one hit, as did Cefaliello, who drove in three runs.

The Vikings next face South Carolina-Salkehatchie at 1 p.m. in a doubleheader at home on Sunday. And Littlefield said she will have a better idea of what her team looks like then.

"If we jump out on Sunday and if we sweep (Salkehatchie), I will know for sure we will stick around and be a consistent team," Littlefield said.