

SPORTS

Vikings take out Polk, 8-3

Collect 12 hits three days after
struggling in Panama City

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St. Johns River State College will have enough challenges to its newly acquired No. 2 state ranking over the next two weeks with the star-studded Capital City Bank Classic and John Tindall Classic on the horizon.

That made it important for the Vikings to take care of business Tuesday against a respectable Polk State College team.

They did just that, striking for four runs in the first inning and pulling out to an 8-3 victory over the Eagles on an unseasonably warm night at Tindall Field. Three days after being held to nine hits in two games at the Kevin Miller Classic in Panama City, St. Johns rang up a dozen hits while improving to 11-2. The Eagles dropped to 6-5.

"I thought we were good offensively, which was good coming off those last three games," said SJR State coach Ross Jones. "This was an important game because of the schedule we've got the next two weeks. We needed to get off to a good start."

The Vikings got off to a great start against Polk, scoring four runs in the first inning and leading 7-1 after J.J. Sousa's two-run homer in the fifth.

They took advantage of three walks in the first, wrapped around a double by Ryan Romano. A one-out, bases-loaded walk to Ben Spittler forced Chase Malloy home for the game's first run. Andre James' sacrifice fly to center got Romano home and was deep enough to leave Spittler and Charlie Welch in position to score on Chase Sanguinetti's single to right. Ten Vikings combined on the 12-hit offense.

Welch was 2-4, Romano 2-5 with a double. Sousa and Nick Tripp both homered - Tripp had a solo shot in the seventh - and Joe Becker doubled in his only at-bat. James, Sanguinetti, Michael Rosario, Sean McArdle and Sandon Witt all singled.

Five St. Johns pitchers combined for 12 strikeouts, allowing three earned runs on eight hits with six walks.

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Starter Caleb Dix (2-0) didn't allow a run before reaching his pitch limit with one out in the fourth.

"Overall, I was pleased with the pitching. Caleb Dix pitched really well. (Jason) Gonzalez threw two really good innings," Jones said. "We walked six, but we struck out 12 and pitched out of some jams."

The Capital City Bank Classic starts Thursday, when the Vikings face Northwest Florida State College. They play Miami Dade Friday, Florida SouthWestern and Gulf Coast on Saturday. All five teams are ranked in the state coaches' poll.

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