

St. Johns withstands weather, foe

First win over SCF; Tindall Classic
continues today, Sunday

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Tough conditions and a tough opponent leave a team no choice but to tough it out.

St. Johns River State College did just that in beating State College of Florida for the first time on a cold, windy Friday night before a few dozen hearty souls at Tindall Field.

Juan Jamie's second double of the game drove in the tiebreaking run with two out in the sixth and two relievers made the lead stand up for a 3-2 victory over the Manatees on Day Two of the John Tindall Classic.

Until dangerous Jamarcus Lyons' fly ball settled in the glove of center fielder Ben Spittler for the final out – stranding runners at first and second – St. Johns was 0-5 against SCF under head coach Ross Jones, losing twice in the state tournament, three times during the regular season. Friday was the third win in a row for SJR State (14-6) after losing all four in the Capital City Bank Classic it hosted last weekend. SCF is 7-9 and has lost three straight.

Named for the coach who led the program from 1964-93, the Tindall Classic continues with four seven-inning games today, capped by St. Johns against Hillsborough at 6 p.m. The Vikings have a 1 p.m. Sunday game against East Georgia before which the Tindall Scholarship will be presented and to which all his former players are invited free of charge.

The weather is expected to be a little more cooperative than it was Friday.

“We competed in every phase tonight in tough conditions – a tough night to hit, a tough night to pitch, a tough night to defend,” Jones said.

Making his debut in the starting rotation after impressing in relief, Jason Gonzalez (2-0) gave the Vikings six strong innings – 10 strikeouts, one walk and two unearned runs on six hits.

Taking over in the seventh, Caleb Dix retired the first five Manatees he faced before departing for Jackson Hodnick after a two-out walk in the eighth. Hodnick got out of the eighth with a ground ball, allowed a leadoff single in the ninth, then struck out two and walked a batter before getting Lyons – 2-4 with a double to that point – on a fly ball. The save was Hodnick's first.

“Jason Gonzalez pitched really well. I'll take (his numbers) any day,” Jones said. “Caleb Dix came in, got us five outs. Caleb's growing every day.”

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SCF got its runs in the top of the third off singles by Lyons and Rook Ellington and a double by Aaron McKiethan. Back came St. Johns with two runs in the home half.

Jaime doubled down the line

in left and scored when Joe Becker reached on an error. Becker moved up when Ryan Romano reached on an error and scored on a two-out single to right by Chase Sanguinetti.

It remained 2-2 until the sixth when Charlie Welch, battling out of a slump with a 2-4 performance, drove a 3-2 pitch to left center, then raced from first to third on a wild pitch. Jaime doubled into the corner

in left with two out, scoring Welch.

The relievers took it from there.

“Juan's going to be a really good player. He just needs experience,” Jones said. “Charlie Welch is really starting two swing the bat. He was trying to hit five home runs every time up. He was trying to carry us. I told him we've got a good lineup.”