



By EARL WATT

- Leader & Times

Liberal's competitive developmental baseball league started the season with a pitcher's duel Thursday with the Royals earning a 3-2 win over the Rockies.

The Rockies were missing starting catcher Brody Warren due to illness, forcing coach Ron Warren to adjust his defense and his line-up.

Warren put Cesar Burciaga on the mound for the season opener, and the hard-throwing right hander only gave up one run in the first three innings.

The Royals scored in the first inning when Jett Brown reached on a hit to right field. With two outs, Burciaga attempted to pick off Brown at first base, but the throw was out of the reach of Malcolm Wiltshire, and Brown was able to score on the play to give the Royals a 1-0 lead.

Two innings later, the Royals returned the favor when Wiltshire was at third and Brown was on the mound. Brown attempted a pick off that sailed by the third baseman, and Burciaga was able to tie the game.

The Rockies scored again when a passed ball allowed Ericson Vasquez to score that gave the Rockies a 2-1 lead.

The Rockies had a chance to add another run, but Brown was able to get a strike out to end the inning just before Burciaga stole home.

The Royals were able to tie the game up in the fifth.

The Rockies had another scoring opportunity in the bottom of the fifth when a two-out rally had Rockies at first and second after Brown had retired the first two batters at the top of the Rockies line-up.

Brown was able to end the inning with a strike out and left the go-ahead run stranded at third.

Brown was called out in the top of the sixth and final inning on a close play at first, but the Royals were able to get a base runner and move him over to third with two outs.

A wild pitch allowed the run to score, and the Royals regained the lead, 3-2.

The Rockies again put runners on the bases in the sixth but could not push one across the plate, and Brown was able to record a complete-game victory, 3-2.

Burciaga also pitched all six innings for the Rockies and recorded nine strike outs.