

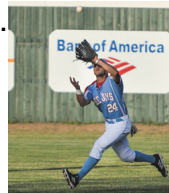
By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Three Bee Jay pitchers took the mound Thursday, and none of them surrendered a run in a four-hit shutout of Owasso, Okla., for a 7-0 win and a 2-0 start to the 2013 season.

Austin King started for the Bee Jays and pitched into the fourth inning before Owasso was able to get a hit, a soft bloop to short center.

Manager Brandon Kitch, who has the pitchers on a count early in the summer, relieved King with Chris Miller who found himself with a bases-loaded jam in the bottom of the fourth but was able to get the final out without giving up any runs.



The Bee Jays jumped out to a quick start with two runs in the first inning, and by the end of the third had a 5-0 lead.

The Bee Jays were able to get key two-out hits early to score runs with runners in scoring position.

But it was an improved Bee Jay defense that helped seal the win. On opening night, the Bee Jays committed four errors that allowed Owasso to score unearned runs.

But Thursday, the Bee Jays cut the miscues in half to only two, and neither came back to haunt the Bee Jays due to the solid pitching effort.

“On the mound we are lights out,” Kitch said of the first two games. “I like the way we started on the mound. We had some rough spots, but we will get that figured out. Owasso has a good club. They have some talent on their team. They are not a pushover. They have a classy program, and we have to show up and compete. I told the guys yesterday don’t take them lightly.”

Liberal is still missing a number of players who are still competing in the College World Series tournaments, and that has some players in different positions. The infield will change when the rest of the staff makes it to Liberal, but the early season pitching work will have benefits throughout the summer.

“Some guys are getting some mound time right now,” Kitch said. “King did a great job. I told them they are all on pitch counts, but I won’t take them out if they are throwing a no-hitter. I was burned in Kentucky when I took a kid out twice throwing a no hitter. It was the same kid, and I didn’t even know it. I don’t want to take the opportunity away from a kid. It is a rare thing. (Owasso) got a little Texas leaguer over our shortstop’s head, and that gave us a chance to get him out of there. This work now will solidify our bullpen down the stretch.”