



By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Bee Jay manager Brandon Kitch hasn't forgotten.

Last year, the Bee jays had Hays on the ropes only to let the Larks escape with two come-from-behind wins at Brent Gould Field.

The losses made a difference in the final league standings and national tournament seedings.

"I still have kind of a vendetta with them," Kitch said. "We let a couple get away."

Hays and El Dorado finished in the top six at the NBC World Series a year ago, and the Larks made it to the Final Four before losing to the Seattle Studs.

Liberal has to wait a day to face Hays

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The Bee Jays made the top 10 but had two rare losses to in-state teams at the national tournament — the Hutchinson Monarchs and the Dodge City A's. Five of the final 10 teams came from the Jayhawk League.

Looking at the bigger picture, the games in early June have a major impact by late July on which teams get to compete at the NBC World Series, and where they will be seeded.

While Liberal is still waiting on players, these two games against Hays are critical in the race for the national championship.

Another crown has also been more difficult than even a national championship for the Bee Jays — A Jayhawk League title. Liberal has not won the league since 1999 but has two national titles since then (2000 and 2010).