



By JEREMIAH WILSON

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The Liberal Bee Jays were able to put on a show for the hometown crowd Thursday night. Scoring early and often, the Bee Jays came away with an 11-6 win over the Dodge City Athletics.

Liberal did not hesitate putting runs up on the boards, scoring two runs in the first inning.

Shortstop Tanner Kirk was the first of many Bee Jays to cross the plate when he came in on a sacrifice fly by Liberal's new first baseman Brady Capshaw. Capshaw finished the night with three RBIs.

Outfielder Tanner Rainey later scored in the inning on an error. Dodge City committed a total of five errors in the game.

Zach Reding led off the second with a stand-up double. He later scored in the inning on a passed ball, giving Liberal a 3-0 advantage.

As the Liberal offense was putting runs on the board, Bee Jay starter Chad Nack was filling up the stat sheet with what was a masterful performance on the mound.

Nack had six strikeouts through the first three innings. He finished the night with 12 strikeouts in seven innings pitched, giving up no runs on three hits.

“Chad (Nack) did a great job competing tonight,” Liberal manager Brandon Kitch said. “He had more of a competitive streak in him tonight because of what Dodge did to him last time, and the way the game ended Sunday in Derby.”

As Nack was mowing down the competition, the Bee Jay offense continued to roll.

In the fourth inning Liberal stretched its lead to 6-0. Third baseman Jon Mestas, right fielder Lewis Guilbeau and Reding all scored in the inning. Reding scored three times on the night.

In the sixth inning the Bee Jays really hammered the Dodge City pitching staff, putting up another five runs on the board for an 11-0 lead.

The only hiccup in the game for Liberal came in the eighth inning. After Nack had been relieved, the Bee Jay bullpen gave up six runs in the frame. It was too little, too late for the Athletics by that point.

“Our bullpen has got to do a better job of shutting them down,” Kitch said. “It’s not a concern though because our bullpen has been a strength for us up to this point. Overall we did a good job. Chad (Nack) was geared up tonight, and I don’t know how he couldn’t be with this crowd. They support this team and this town. It’s a great feeling to see Chad (Nack) do this.”

The win combined with a Derby win over Wellington on Thursday night puts Liberal within a game and a half of third place in the Jayhawk League standings.

The Bee Jays will have a big two-game series at home with league-leader Hays beginning tonight at Brent Gould Field.

“If we can get Hays twice, that will put us right back in contention in the top three,” Kitch said. “Everybody is going to have to contribute for us down the stretch.”