By JEREMIAH WILSON

• Leader & Times

The Babe Ruth League 13-year-old district tournament kicked off at the Libral Baseball Complex Friday and ended with a high scoring battle between Cimarron River and Stevens County.

In their opening game, the 13-year-old Rattlers battled back from an early deficit and came off the field winners with an exciting 18-17 victory that came down to the final out.

Rattler starter Tristen Bigham struggled mightily in the first inning, walking seven batters and allowing five runs.

Cimarron River answered in the home half of the first with two runs of their own.

Stevens County fired back with four more runs in the second, and the Rattlers found themselves down 9-2.

The Cimarron River hitters found a groove in the bottom of the second, bringing in five runners

to inch the Rattlers to within two at 9-7.

From that point on a wild race to the finish ensued.

The Rattler pitchers settled down in the third and fourth innings, allowing only one run.

Cimarron River scored two in the third and another in the fourth and the game was knotted up at 10 after four.

The fifth inning was the turning point.

Stevens County put two runs up in the top of the inning, but the Rattlers refused to give up after fighting so hard to tie it up.

Down 12-10 heading into the bottom half of the fifth, the Cimarron River hitters exploded for seven runs.

Kaleb Wilmes and Hollis Fitzgerald opened up the rally, coming in on an error with one out to tie the game at 12-12.

Bigham scored on a Tucker Deaton single, and the Rattlers had their first lead of the game, 13-12.

Jose Garcia Jr. rattled the Steven County catcher and stole home on a daring play.

Tyrique Chandler came in to score next on a bases loaded walk to Alex Arriaga.

Ethan Hatcher and Derryck Symons also scored in the inning to give Cimarron River a 17-12 lead.

Six of the seven Rattlers runs in the fifth came with one out.

Stevens County put four runs up in the top of the sixth, and it was once again a one-run game.

In the home half of the sixth, Bigham came in to score on another RBI single by Deaton, giving Cimarron River a 18-16 lead headed into the final inning.

The run in the sixth for the Rattlers proved to be vitally important.

Steven County scored one run in the top of the seventh off of Garcia, making it 18-17, and had a runner on second with two outs.

The next hitter for Stevens County nailed a come backer to the mound, which Garcia scooped up and threw to first. His throw was a bit high and the runner was safe.

With runners on the corners, the next hitter also hit the ball right back to the mound. This time Garcia ran the ball to first for the final out of the game for the 18-17 win.

“I’m really proud,” Rattler manager Frederick Gomez said. “They struggled in the first, but the good thing is that they learned to never give up. We’ve played with plenty of people before and been down, then came back and won.”

Cimarron River advanced to the championship game of the tournament Saturday.