



By JEREMIAH WILSON

- Leader & Times

The season ended for the Cimarron River Rattlers following a pair of losses to Stevens County in the Babe Ruth 13-year-old district tournament over the weekend in Liberal.

Saturday afternoon the Rattlers came up short of a victory in an 18-15 loss, and again fell short Sunday afternoon 10-3.

The Cimarron River hitters crushed the Steven County starter on Saturday for five runs in the first inning.

Unfortunately for the Rattlers, the Stevens County hitters put up even bigger numbers, scoring a whopping 10 runs in the bottom of the first.

The two teams continued to produce offense through the first three innings, but the Cimarron River bats could not produce a run in the fourth and Stevens County took full advantage of the opportunity.

Rattler 13s let 'if' game get away

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Up 11-7 as they came to bat in the fourth, the Stevens County hitters busted the game wide open, scoring seven runs to extend their lead to 18-7.

In the fifth, the Rattlers avoided losing by run rule by scoring three times to make it an 18-10 game.

The Rattlers scored five more in the sixth, but could not score in the seventh and came up just short of a comeback in the 18-15 loss, forcing a third and final game between the two teams Sunday.

Cimarron River starter Jose Garcia Jr. came out strong and kept Stevens County off the board early in the "if" game.

"He was great, he did great for us," Rattler manager Victor Rivera said. "He started to get tired a little bit there at the end."

Stevens County starter Nathan Linener was even better on the day though, going the distance in a dominating performance.

"He really doesn't like to pitch," Stevens County manager Chuck Linener said. "I don't like him to pitch because it makes me nervous, but he came through big for us."

Third baseman Alex Carrillo scored in the bottom of the first on a two-out, bases-loaded walk to Derryck Symons. That was the only run the Rattlers produced in the first and were up 1-0.

Cimarron River scored again in the second when Ethan Hatcher crossed home plate on an error for a 2-0 lead.

The Rattlers encountered some trouble once they took the field in the third and found themselves down 3-2.

“More than half of those runs (in the game) were because of our errors,” Rivera said. “If we can minimize little things like that, I don’t think there’s a team out there that can beat us.”

Stevens County scored three more runs in the fourth to extend their lead to 6-2.

Cimarron River would score on an RBI single by Garcia in the fourth to make it 6-3, but the Rattlers did not score again.

“The bats didn’t show up a little bit today,” Rivera said. “We battled there back and forth, and had good hits here and there, but we just didn’t put it together like we did last night to give ourselves that chance to win.”

Stevens County scored a run in the sixth and three more in the seventh to finish off the Rattlers 10-3.

“All season we’ve been playing against 14- and 15-year-olds,” Rivera said. “For just being 13s I think we gave a great performance this season. I couldn’t be more proud of them. This whole season we battled hard. We played good teams, we played a good team here with Hugoton. I don’t take anything from them, they’re a good team, and they beat us last night and beat us today. I just think that with all the performances of our team, we did pretty good.”

Stevens County now moves on to the state tournament Thursday in Frontenac.

“They played awesome,” Chuck Linener said. “They never quit, never hung their heads. Our teams a little bit different this year. We lost some very good players in Moscow. They played in a different league and that kind of hurt us, but our guys stepped up and played big and played positive and kept a great attitude even when adversity struck. I’m just tremendously proud of

them. This will be the third year in a row we've gone.

“Last year both the Rattlers and us went, and the Rattlers beat us in district and the year before we beat them. They're a very good team and should be very proud of themselves. They're a complete team and we were fortunate to come out ahead, and we will try to represent this district well.”