



By JEREMIAH WILSON

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With only five league games remaining heading into Thursday night's game with Dodge City, the Liberal Bee Jays came away with a 5-4 victory.

The Liberal hitters came alive early as the Bee Jays jumped out to an early 3-0 lead.

Second baseman Darien McLemore hit a triple to start the first inning and later scored on an errant throw back to the pitcher after Brady Capshaw struck out.

Seth Stevens walked and then came around on a Wigberto Nevarez single to make it 2-0.

Lewis Guilbeau hit an RBI single in the second to score Zack Reding for a 3-0 lead.

Jack Mabe, who has been a reliever this season, made his first start and gave Liberal six innings of solid pitching.

With the exception of a bad fourth inning, when Mabe gave up four runs and the lead, he had a spectacular effort on the mound for the Bee Jays.

“His stuff was good early,” Liberal manager Brandon Kitch said. “He kind of lost his off-speed stuff there in the fourth inning. But he came back and got some shutdown innings with base runners on. Then we gave it up to Buss, and he came in and shut the door.”

Down 4-3 heading into the bottom of the fourth, McLemore once again came up big for Liberal with a two-out RBI double that scored Sam Pack to tie it up 4-4.

Reding scored again in the fifth on a Tanner Kirk groundout to give the Bee Jays a 5-4 lead.

Reliever Tyler Buss relieved Mabe to start the seventh and finished the game out to pick up a rare three-inning save.

The showing from Buss was a big one for Liberal. The team recently lost closer Tyler Peitzmeier for the rest of the season.

“We’re a closer-by-committee now,” Kitch said. “It just depends on whoever we feel is best out of the bullpen.”

The all-around team effort was big for the Bee Jays who refused to give up when they fell behind in the fourth.

“The win shows the resilience of this team,” Kitch said. “They know as long as we’ve got outs left, we’re still in the ball game. They’re in a state right now where I think they expect to win instead of playing to lose. I think early on we were playing to lose instead of playing to win. The expectation around here is to win.”

McLemore’s improved performance at the plate and on the field has helped Liberal to keep themselves in the race for an automatic bid to the NBC World Series.

“Darien is swinging the bat really good right now,” Kitch said. “I feel confident that when there’s guys on or nobody on he can square the ball up and put it in play. He’s swinging the bat real well.”

“We’ve put ourselves in a position where we can still climb into that third spot,” Kitch said. “We have to sweep against El Dorado and that starts tomorrow. The first game is always the momentum builder. If we can get some momentum going in to tomorrow night, I think that gives us a chance on Saturday and on Sunday. It’s all going to start on the mound, and it always has. I think we’re in a spot where we’re swinging the bats pretty good and can overcome some big innings and get big innings ourselves. But it’s all going to start on the mound for us.”