


By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Receiving a late bid to the NBC World Series is nothing new for the Liberal Bee Jays.

Playing in one of the most competitive summer leagues in the nation, it has not been uncommon for some of the best teams in the tournament to be the third or fourth place team in the Jayhawk League. 

Sunday, Bee Jay General Manager Mike Carlile told the team that they had not yet received a bid, and wasn't sure if they would.

"To a man, they all said they wanted to stay together and wait and see," Carlile said. "There was never any chance of anyone leaving."

With the team fully committed to sticking together and waiting for a bid, the call came late Monday night that a spot had opened up, and that the Bee Jay were invited.

Carlile and the Bee Jay Board hadn't waited to plan for a tournament appearance to make enhancements to the roster.

"We have four pitchers and a position player lined up," Carlile said. "We did the groundwork last week. We had a feeling we were going to go. We started talking to coaches, looking at kids,

(Seward County head coach) Galen McSpadden helped us out. We are shored up, we are ready to go.”

At the same time the Bee Jays were preparing to attend the tournament, Carlile was not getting a warm and fuzzy feeling from the NBC selection committee.

“I talked to them last week, and they told me we weren’t in,” he said. “I explained the history, we’ve been there. When the Bee Jays play in Lawrence Dumont, you see a bunch of white hats. They are paying fans. We travel well, but those all didn’t come with us. I started lobbying for this position last Monday, and I am not trying to lobby for a team that doesn’t belong there. These guys belong there. We are a tough ball club. We are a good ball club. Hays has 10 losses in the league this year, and four of them are to us. That says something.”

Liberal has been one of the most consistent teams at the NBC World Series, winning five national championships, finishing second seven times and making 55 appearances.

But the effort to make the tournament have more out-of-state representation counted against the Bee Jays.

“I was told it was a downfall to be a Kansas team,” Carlile said. “The tournament is trying to get more national. We are nationally known. Our kids come from everywhere.”

Other Kansas teams received invitations before the Bee Jays, and none had the history or success of the Liberal Bee Jays over the past half century.

Despite the disappointment in the process, Carlile was “tickled” that the Bee Jays received an invitation.

Liberal will face the San Diego Force at 4 p.m. Saturday at Lawrence Dumont Stadium.

The Force (34-6) has put up big numbers in 2013 in the Western Baseball Association Southern Division and has been a regular in the NBC World Series in recent years.

In the past four years, the Force has turned in a record of 5-8 at the NBC while the Bee Jays have a record of 19-7 in the same period and defeated the Force in 2010 on their way to a national championship.