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By JEREMIAH WILSON

- Leader & Times

The Liberal Bee Jays season came to a close yesterday with a



6-2 loss to the Cape Girardeau Capahas to eliminate Liberal from the 79th NBC World Series.

The Bee Jay hitters once again struggled to produce, and the bullpen imploded late, giving up four runs in the eighth.

Missed opportunities plagued Liberal in it's opening game to the San Diego Force, which resulted in a loss, and they came back to haunt the Bee Jays again in yesterday's loss.

Liberal had scored runs in the second and fifth and led 2-0. The Bee Jays had their opportunity to extend the lead in the seventh but could not capitalize.

That missed opportunity might have possibly cost them the game and their tournament lives.

Liberal took a 1-0 lead when Darien McLemore brought in Brady Capshaw with a sacrifice fly in the second.

The Bee Jays later pushed the lead to 2-0 on an RBI double by Jason Dahl that scored Luis Diaz.

Leading 2-0 in the seventh, Jason Dahl stepped to the plate with the bases loaded and one out.

Dahl had been the Bee Jays best and most reliable hitter in the tournament. He had owned opposing pitchers, hitting .500 with a double, a triple, a home run, four RBIs, three runs scored and three walks.

If ever a situation arose that screamed opportunity, this was it.

Instead of swinging, Dahl squared up to bunt for the squeeze play, and popped it up to the catcher for the second out.

“I personally killed our momentum when I made that call, and I apologized to the guys for that,” Liberal manager Brandon Kitch said. “At this level of play momentum is a huge thing. I put it all on my shoulders because it didn’t work out. If it had worked I would have looked like a genius for it. Unfortunately, it didn’t work. I feel like I just out-thought myself when I made that call.”

John Mestas popped out to shortstop and Liberal helped the Capahas out of a jam.

Cape Girardeau scored two in the bottom of the seventh off of Bee Jay starter Austin King, and the game was tied, 2-2.

King was pulled after giving up the two runs, and Kitch brought in reliever Tyler Buss.

“That was one of his best outings all summer,” Kitch said of King. “Adam did a great job working with him on some mechanical stuff. I felt bad for him because that was one of his best outings this summer. It’s better to take him out one pitch too early rather than one pitch too late, and we might have waited one pitch too late. He threw a good game and got out of some tough situations early.”

Buss walked the first batter he faced on four pitches, then settled down and struck out the next batter to end the inning.

After the Bee Jays failed to score in the top of the eighth, Buss came back out to the mound looking to send it to the ninth still tied at two.

Buss did not last long in the eighth. He loaded the bases after facing the first three hitters.

Kitch brought in Chad Nack to replace Buss, eerily similar to the same substitution in the first loss of the tournament.

Nack promptly gave up two runs after a single. He gave up two more runs on a passed ball and an error by Sam Pack to give Cape Girardeau a 6-2 lead.

Only one of the runs given up by Nack was credited to him, and it was unearned.

The Bee Jays failed to score in the ninth, and the game, tournament and season were over for Liberal.

“I hate the way it ended because these guys worked so hard,” Kitch said. “This loss is going to

stick with me more than any other.”

This is the third year in a row that Liberal finished the tournament with a record of 3-2.

“We struggled all summer because we got ourselves in a hole early,” Kitch said. “These guys never gave up, and busted their butts all summer long. I couldn’t ask more from them. We could have easily been 10 to 12 games under .500, and we weren’t. We fought back to being within a half of a game out of third with two games left.

“I have to give it up to my assistants, Adam and Ryon, as well,” Kitch said. “They did a great job pushing the guys all summer to become better players. They made my job a lot easier.”

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