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Special to the Leader & Times

The reigning Jayhawk West Conference Champion Seward County Saints didn't quite get off to the start to conference play they were looking for on Friday afternoon at Brent Gould Field.

Taking on a Barton team who was the lone West team to miss the playoffs last season, the Saints managed only a split on the first day of the series, getting a pitching gem from freshman JB Olson in the opener to win 2-1 before seeing a late rally come up short in Game 2 as they fell 11-7.

Game 1 opened as a pitcher's duel between Seward's JB Olson and Barton's Brandon Mercer. The two went back and forth through the first three innings of the game with Barton picking up a pair of singles and Mercer keeping the Saints without a baserunner as the game remained scoreless into the fourth.

Olson dealt another one, two, three inning in the top of the fourth and Seward finally got their first baserunner of the game as Brandon Uriquizo legged out an infield single to start the Saints half of the fourth. Brent Williams walked with one out and Kevin Connolly bounced a ball up the middle to bring Uriquizo home to put the Saints on top 1-0. One batter later Connor Smith launched a deep fly ball to right field to bring home Williams to put Seward in front 2-0.

Barton scored a run in the seventh and had the tying run at third with two outs when Olson went to his slider which worked its way under Hughes' bat for strike three to end the game, giving the Saints a 2-1 win.

Game 2 of the twinbill was a completely different story from the start.

Seward pitching had trouble finding the strike zone early on and a second-inning walk helped contribute to a run for the Cougars to give them a 1-0 lead.

Barton built a 7-1 lead by the fourth inning and added four more in the seventh.

Seward rallied with six in the seventh to cut the lead to 11-7.

Seward loaded the bases in the eighth but came up empty. Neither team scored in the ninth, and Seward lost 11-7.

Seward outhit Barton 13-11 in the game, but five Saints errors and 10 walks from Seward pitching doomed the Saints in the loss.

Seward moved to 10-8 on the season and faced each other in a double header Saturday.

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