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BJ's Walk Away in Defeat at NBC, Play Friday at 10:30am

The Liberal Bee Jays let a 3-2 lead with one out in the bottom of the ninth slip away after the BJ bullpen walked three straight batters to force home the tying and winning runs in a 4-3 loss to the Hutchinson Monarchs Wednesday evening at Lawrence-Dumont Stadium in Wichita.

Closer John Branum walked home the tying run and Earl Jenkins walked home the winning run. Liberal falls into the loser's bracket and will play on Friday at a time to be announced.

The loss spoiled a gutsy outing by Cody Crabaugh who went seven strong innings in heat which reached 108 degrees in Wichita. Crabaugh (2-4) allowed two runs on four hits while striking out six and walking two. Trevor Lundgrin pitdched 2/3 scoreless before Ray Ashford pitched 1/3 of an inning. Branum, who has saved five games this year and had an ERA of 1.83, got the first man in the 9th to ground to second. But with a 1-2 count beaned the seven hole hitter. The next batter, Terrell Brown, doubled down the third base line making runners at second and third with one out. Branum is not a strikeout pitcher so head coach Brandon Kitch elected to intentionally walk the nine hole hitter to load the bases and set up double play possibilities. The plan backfired when Branum walked the next batter on four pitched to tie the game before Jenkins walked in the winning run on four pitches. The game finished on three straight walks and 12 straight balls.

The BJ's scored first when Jake Barrios doubled off the top of the left center field wall to score Dylan Delso. But Stephen Gandy was thrown out at home trying to score.

In the fifth, Liberal scored two when Dayne Parker singled home a run and Tyler Baker doubled to the left center alley to make it 3-0. That chased starter Corey Roper and the Bee Jays still had runners on second and third with one out when Dalton Bernardi lined to second baseman Terrell Brown who dove to his left caught the ball and turned it into a double play picking off the runner on second. So the Bee Jays had out hit the Monarchs at that point 10-1 but led just 3-0.

The Monarchs scored two runs with two outs in the sixth. A soft line drive to left by Jordan Pearson scored one and then scored a second run when the ball bounded over the left fielder's head on the hot field turf.

The Bee Jays avoided a tie game in the eighth when BJ right fielder Dalton Bernardi threw out Hutchinson's Scott Splett who was trying to score from second on a single by Tyler Detmer.

Liberal is 28-17 and Hutchinson is 27-16. It was the first meeting between the two programs since 2009 when Liberal won a 20-3 decision at Brent Gould Field.

The Liberal Bee Jays will play the winner of the Colorado Sox/Conejo Oaks at 10:30am Friday.

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