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Leader &

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ne bad inning was all it took. The Liberal Bee Jays got a great pitching performance from JB Olson, but made three costly defensive mistakes in the eighth, where Derby scored all three of their runs to hand the Bee Jays a 3-2 loss.

After seven scoreless innings, the Bee Jays got a bad omen by opening the eighth with an error. Derby's lead-off man reached when third baseman Brady Cox, whose natural position is catcher, could not field the hit clean. A stolen base and then a single to centerfield allowed the first run to score.

The Bee Jays could have stopped the bleeding there, but instead allowed a perplexing hit. With one out pitcher Chad Nack forced a pop up. Nack ran to cover first, but the ball ended up landing on the pitcher's mound, with neither the first or third basemen being able to reach the ball on time. Nack struckout the next batter.

It was the second out, but should have been the third, and that proved to be costly.

Derby's next batter doubled to center, and twin runs for the Twins scored to put Derby up 3-0.

Liberal battled back in the bottom half of the eighth, loading the bases on two walks and a single by Alec Isaacs. Cox singled to center to score Robert Dugger, and the bases remained juiced with no outs. Zach Hoffman hit into a double play, and Isaac scored from third to cut the Derby lead to one.

The Bee Jays went three up, three down in the bottom of the ninth to end the game.

"I thought it was a great game of two pitchers going out there and hooking it up," Bee Jays manager Adam Anderson said. "They matched each other just about pitch for pitch for about seven innings. We had a chance in the fifth but didn't capitalize. They had their opportunity and did. In a tight ballgame it comes down to getting one break or making one big play."

In the fifth inning, the Bee Jays got their first two batters on. The next two hit pop flies to centerfield. Isaac got to a full count, fouled off five straight pitches before earning a walk to load the bases. But a grounder to first with the next at bat ended the threat.

Olson went seven innings, allowing seven hits, one walk, five strikeouts, and no earned runs. The Bee Jays managed to get just five hits.

The next two nights will be crucial for the Bee Jays to have a chance to climb in to the top half of the league in time for the NBC World Series.

"When you lose the first game of the series you really put your back against the wall," Anderson said. "We just have to come out tomorrow and

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