

By EARL WATT • Daily Leader

For six innings, the Liberal Bulldogs struggled to get a timely hit.

But in the seventh, Liberal exploded for three runs including a walk-off single by Victor Rivera for a 6-5 win over the Garden City Blues in the season opener of the OK League for both teams.

Brandon Granger took the mound for the Bulldogs, and the Blues were able to get key two-out hits to take a 4-1 lead through five innings.

Chris Flowers came in the sixth and only allowed one run.

Liberal made up two runs in the sixth and entered the seventh trailing 5-3.

Garden City brought in their closer, Danny Gutierrez, a pitcher that had shut down Liberal in the past.

But the Bulldog batters were patient and were able to force Gutierrez to try to catch up after falling behind in the count.

Freddy Gomez led off with a base hit followed by another hit from Granger.

Chuy Torres came up, and coach Eric Olmstead had a choice to make.

“If I didn’t have Chuy coming up, I’m probably bunting,” he said.

“But with Chuy, I decided to swing away and go for the win.”

Torres hit a low pop fly to right field, and Garden City misplayed the ball. It dropped in safe, and the Bulldogs had the bases loaded with no outs.

Flowers was able to get a favorable count which forced Gutierrez to go to the fast ball.

“I had a hitter’s count,” Flowers said. “I knew I needed to hit it hard. Gutierrez doesn’t go to the curve ball when he’s behind in the count, so I was looking fast ball.”

Flowers sent a rocket over the left fielder’s head for a two-RBI double to tie the game 5-5.

Rivera came to the plate with the winning run at third.

“I was expecting the curve ball,” he said. “It was low, but I got enough of it to get it out of the infield.”

Rivera’s game-winning hit gave the Bulldogs the league win.

Earlier in the evening, the Bulldogs won the non-conference five-inning game 5-3.

Bulldogs bite back in seventh for 6-5 win

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“Right now I think our gloves are ahead of our bats,” Olmstead said.

“Our defense was decent. We just didn’t play with emotion. It was a pretty good comeback.”

Liberal will travel to Guymon Friday for a 6 p.m. double header and to Hooker Monday before returning to Liberal to host Ulysses Wednesday.

The OK League consists of Garden City, Guymon, Hooker, Lakin, Liberal, and Ulysses.