

# Eagle improvement not enough to knock off #2 ranked Lakin

By Joey Falkoff

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The Colby Eagle baseball team fell well short of beating 4A #7 ranked Russell in their home opener April 8.

Against second-ranked 3A Lakin, the Eagles showed they were closer to beating the best, but the result remained the same.

The Eagles were three outs from a first game win over the Broncos only to give up four runs in the final frame and lose 8-6. In game two, the Eagles managed only three hits against Lakin starter Reed McAtee and the Broncos won 8-2 to earn the sweep Thursday at the city fields.

Colby is now 7-5 overall, but just 0-4 at home and 1-5 against ranked teams. Still, head coach Kevin Cox refused to call it a disappointing evening.

"I think we competed well against them," said Cox. "We had little victories inside the games, so I think we did OK."

The improvement looked like it would translate into a win for the Eagles, who held a 6-4 lead entering the seventh inning of game one.

Instead, things fell apart rather quickly.

Eagle starter Stephen Dinkel began the inning by walking Beau Bird in four pitches.

Dinkel looked like he rebounded by getting McAtee to lift a lazy fly ball to right center, but neither center fielder Chaz Winger or right fielder Thomas Wieland took charge, and the ball bounced off the glove of Winger as he tried to make a diving catch.

"It's not an excuse, but we have a hard time with that white background behind the plate," said Cox. "It hurt. The centerfielder should have had priority and make a call on it if he can get over there. You can't really look at one error. We should have just closed the deal."

But the Eagles couldn't recover.

Dinkel hit the next batter to load the bases with no one out. Kyle Dassenbrock followed with



JOEY FALCKOFF/Colby Free Press

Eagle shortstop Cade Carter avoided a slide from Lakin's Reed McAtee during the second game of their doubleheader Thursday at the city fields. Colby was swept by Lakin 8-6 and 8-2

a lined single into left that tied the game at 6.

"I think as a pitcher a defensive mistake like that does affect your concentration," said Cox. "I think you try a little harder to get a strikeout."

Kevin Lang came on in relief of Dinkel, and the damage continued.

With men at first and third, Lang threw a wild pitch that allowed the go-ahead run to score. Two batters later, Taylor Lovelady drove a single into left to make it 8-6.

Lakin starter Brock Miller, who struggled throughout much of the game, didn't allow the momentum to escape as he shut the Eagles down in their half of the seventh.

The Eagles tagged Miller for 10 hits in the game. Cory Sager finished 2-4, and was the only Eagle with a multiple-hit game.

Lakin finished with nine hits and used a two-RBI single from Miller to go ahead 2-0 in the first. The Eagles took their first lead, 4-3, in the bottom of the fourth after RBI singles from Eric Blanton

their only extra-base hit.

Dinkel fell to 2-2 after allowing eight runs and eight hits in six plus innings. His stat line might have looked a little better had the Eagles not committed four errors.

Miller may have been just good enough for Lakin to win in game one, but McAtee was downright dominant for the Broncos in game two.

McAtee allowed just three hits in seven innings, and the Eagles didn't record their first hit until the fifth inning.

"He's a tough, tough competitor on the mound," said Cox. "I think these two pitchers are the toughest we'll see all year other than Russell."

McAtee's biggest trouble came in the fifth, but his defense saved the day.

McAtee walked three consecutive hitters with two outs. Sager followed with Colby's first hit, a two-RBI double, that cut the Eagle deficit to 6-2.

With men at second and third, Lang looked like he had pulled the Eagles to within two runs after driving a ball deep to center, but Bird made a sensational, diving catch to end the inning.

"That's a great catch, but that's baseball," said Cox. "You just have to give them credit for that."

The Eagles had another golden

opportunity to trim the lead in the sixth, but failed to come through. With men at second and third and one out, Winger and Blanton both struck out swinging.

"He (McAtee) bared down when he needed to," said Cox.

A third inning error by Dinkel and one in the fourth by Krzycki allowed three of Lakin's first six runs to score. Miller had an RBI double in the fourth to make it 6-0. Lang looked sharp at times, but couldn't keep pace with McAtee.

He fell to 4-2 after allowing eight runs, five earned, and eight hits in 6 1/3 innings.

Despite committing six errors, the Broncos sent the Eagles home from the city fields disappointed once again.

"I knew it would be tough today," said Cox. "We battled. They really didn't blow us out or anything. I wish we could play tough teams like that the rest of the year."

Goodland may not be ranked, but they appear to be a much improved team after sweeping Liberal last week. The Eagles swept Goodland April 4 and will host the Cowboys 4 p.m. Tuesday at the city fields.

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