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• Leader & Times

GARDEN CITY — In a game where the Redskins appeared to be going through the motions, Garden City took advantage by lighting up the scoreboard with both long-range shots and wide open attempts under the basket.

By the time the final buzzer sounded, the Redskins were routed, 63-34.

“We didn’t play very hard all night,” Liberal coach Drew Gruver said. “The guys didn’t have the defensive intensity and the toughness we needed. We turned the ball over too much. We missed free throws. We let that get into our heads, and we carried that down to the defensive end. We have to play hard, and we didn’t play hard at all.”

The lackluster effort was something that Gruver said hasn't happened all year, and the defense at the end of the first quarter might have been deflated when the game was still close. Trailing by only four, Liberal needed to stop the Buffaloes in the waning seconds, but Garden City's Denton Keller fired up a prayer as time expired that banked in to give the Buffaloes an 18-11 lead.

Liberal never recovered.

"We didn't play hard from the start," he said. "We had a lack of effort from the very beginning. I can't think back to any games and fault their effort, but tonight, we didn't play with any energy. When you do that against a good team — really anyone — it will be a long night, and Garden City took care of us."

Liberal only trailed by five midway through the second quarter before Garden City went on a 9-0 run. By half, Garden City had extended to a 12-2 run and a 32-17 lead.

The Redskins narrowed the lead to 10 midway through the third, but again the Buffaloes strung together a 14-5 run to take a 47-28 lead.

Liberal will finish the regular season Friday by hosting Dodge City in The Big House.

"We missed easy ones inside, and they didn't fall from the outside either," Gruver said. "I thought we had some confidence coming in to this game, we were hitting stride. I saw some good things in the last four games, but we took a step backward tonight."