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By EARL WATT

- Leader & Times

Officials take tests to show they have a firm understanding of the rules.

Coaches do, too.

And Cliff Abbott knew after his defense was called for an illegal low block that the rule book was on his side.

He opened the book to page 217 and showed the sideline official.

The move didn't impress the officials, and the Redskins were later called for the same penalty.

"We have to take a test, and I took it once and computer did not record it, so I had to take it again," Abbott said. "On page 217 it defines the chop zone and a clip zone, three yards deep on offensive side of the ball, tackle to tackle, while the ball is in the zone. The officials were saying at the snap of the ball it dissolves. I showed them in the book the ball has to leave the zone for it to dissolve, you can't cut or clip in that zone after that. I didn't win that one, either."

One of those calls allowed a stop on third down to result in a Hays first down, and the drive resulted in a touchdown.

Despite the ruling against the Redskins, Abbott continued to push his troops in perhaps their best effort in the 19-game losing streak against Western Athletic Conference opponents.

"These guys fought from beginning to end," Abbott said. "They came prepared this week. I was very proud of them. We will see what kind of character we have when we get up in the morning and get ready for Dodge City. I was proud of the effort. It wasn't mistake free, obviously, but it was an unbelievable effort. What I am proud of at the very end, when they got it down to six, we made a decision to let them score. It doesn't show how the game really was."

The 14-point margin of victory for the Hays Indians may seem deceptive to those who were in the stands. With 2:33 to play, the game was only a six-point differential, and the Redskins were only one stop away from getting a chance to take the lead. That is a leaps and bounds ahead of where the Redskins have been in the past five seasons.

"I would take these kids against anyone in the state," Abbott said. "We felt we were in better condition with our high speed offense and tempo, and we had them on the ropes. It was a great tribute to our kids and coaches for working hard. Late, we got a couple of penalties and put ourselves behind the eight ball, but we still felt we could do it. We had our chances in the fourth."

Liberal will travel to Dodge City Friday looking to snap the 19-game WAC losing streak and stay alive in the conference title race.

Kick-off is scheduled for 7 p.m.

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