

When a team has not won a conference game in 19 tries, it comes as no surprise that they are the underdog.

**4<sup>th</sup>**  
**& GOAL**



EARL WATT

Friday night in Dodge City, the Redskins were the homecoming game for the Red Demons. Typically, teams want to win on homecoming, and with Liberal's struggles in recent years, I'm sure Dodge City thought they had an easy victory scheduled for the big night.

But this is a different Redskin team in a number of ways.

The offense is a fine-tuned machine. The defense is gaining confidence every week.

After suffering a loss to Hays a week ago, Liberal is now a team that can bounce back from adversity.

With all of those assets, and a team that has spent the last five years dealing with losing, it just didn't seem like Liberal was facing a better team on Friday

The fact is, they weren't.

Liberal was the better team.

Dodge City dropped several passes and committed costly penalties.

Liberal executed its game plan, not perfectly, but the pace was clearly set by the Redskins.

Liberal looked like the seasoned team, and despite a size advantage for the Red Demons, the Redskins also looked like they were the bulldog on a pork chop.

There is something to be said for desire, drive and hutzpah that goes beyond skill and confidence.

For years, Cliff Abbott has been the emotional force behind his team, sometimes appearing to be a lone wolf in the wilderness.

But with a little success, this team is starting to see what Abbott has been driving home these past few years.

It's not as simple as trying hard, or even your best. It is discovering a new level, it is pushing beyond the standards of excellence to redefine what excellence means.

Abbott and the coaches can take the Redskins through the drills and teach them the skills, and with some teams that may be enough.

But converting the desire to win into the drive to win has to come from the player himself.

After three years, this team is discovering that intangible that makes all the difference.

This Redskins team is scrappy, and that makes them dangerous.

And what might come natural to a few is now becoming contagious to all.

There is a cliché that does not do justice to the anger, the anguish and the determination that showed up Friday night, even though it might be the only way to describe exactly what that inner drive is all about: Liberal simply wanted it more.