

By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

There was a playoff feel to Friday night's game with Goddard, even if the fans opted to stay in the warmth of their homes rather than the stands at Redskin Field.

Both Goddard and Liberal knew there was no room for error, and that it was time for playmakers to live up to their reputation.

For the Redskins, that is what happened.

Trenton Hammond caught four touchdown passes, Rex Heronemus ran for three, and Britton Abbott threw for 304 yards and ran for 146 more in a 64-46 win.

"In big games, this was the biggest game all year as a district game, you want your big players to make big plays," Liberal coach Cliff Abbott said. "Britton made crucial decisions, and kids made big catches. Rex was running hard. We have a great combination of backs."

While Abbott and Heronemus combined for 250 yards on the ground, Hammond was making big plays in the air while being guarded by a freshman.

"We didn't know that going in," Abbott said. "We didn't know who was guarding Hammond. We liked what we saw. That young man will be a good player. He was thrown into the fire against one of the best players in the state."

Once Goddard realized they could not contain Hammond with one defender and started to double team the D-1 prospect, Abbott found Nolan Larkin and Lorenzo Pando as well as Heronemus.

“When they try to double Trenton, you go to Nolan, you have Rex out of the back field if that doesn’t work, you get your 230-pound quarterback running,” Abbott said. “They performed well.”

Last year, Goddard jumped out to a 21-point lead before the Redskins scored, but the Redskins reversed that trend, jumping out to a 24-3 lead this year.

“We didn’t come out on defense last year,” Abbott said. “It was 21-0 and we couldn’t even see out of the fog yet. We started practicing about being fast starters. It’s a high stakes game for the future of both programs right now. It had to be a win for both sides. They prepared for a week, we prepared for a year. There was a lot of emotion.”

Liberal (4-3, 1-0) will travel to Goddard-Eisenhower Friday to face the Tigers (2-5, 0-1) in the second game of district play. A Liberal win all but secure a playoff berth. Liberal has not been in the playoffs since 2009 and has not won a playoff game since 2005.