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By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

GODDARD — Liberal added another highlight to a history of fantastic finishes Friday night when Trenton Hammond reeled in an 18-yard touchdown pass while being surrounded by three Eisenhower defender with 1.4 seconds to play to rally past Eisenhower 36-31 and secure Liberal's first post-season berth since 2009.

The play capped arguably the most exciting five minutes of the entire season.

Liberal led most of the game until Eisenhower narrowed the lead to 22-17, and Hammon was tackled on the 1 foot line on the following kick-off after trying to make a play by reversing his field at the 10 yard line but being buried by five Eisenhower defenders just short of a safety.

Liberal moved the ball to the 9 yard line and attempted a first-down run on fourth-and-two, but Britton Abbott was stopped after a one-yard gain, and the Tigers only needed one play to take the lead on a strong run up the middle by Dylan Thompson for the 10-yard touchdown with 5:01

to play.

But the Redskins struck back with a nine-play, 80-yard drive that only took 2:46 off the clock and ended with a two-yard run by Abbott that gave the Redskins a 30-24 lead.

With 2:15 to play, the Tigers put together another scoring drive that went 63 yards on five plays in 54 seconds that ended with a 36-yard touchdown pass from sophomore Dalton Dinkel to senior Trevon Evans, and Eisenhower had a 31-30 lead with 1:19 to play.

Liberal started its final drive of the night at its own 22 yard line, and Abbott completed a pass to Nolan Larkin for 32 yards to the Tiger 46 yard line where Larkin stepped out of bounds.

Abbott completed another pass to Rex Heronemus for seven yards, and Hammond caught a 13-yard pass to stop the clock with the ball at the Eisenhower 28 yard line.

Cristian Erives caught a three-yard pass to move the ball to the 25 yard line, and Abbott completed his fifth-straight pass on the drive for eight yards to Hammond to move the ball to the 18 yard line.

After an incomplection to Erives left 9.8 seconds to play, there was little question where the final pass would go.

Abbott took the snap and looked at Hammond who was double-teamed on the left sideline. Abbot lofted the ball to the end zone, and a third Eisenhower defender moved in. With defenders in front, behind and beside Hammond next to the boundary, four sets of hands reached into the air, but it was Hammond's hands that reached higher. Two of the three defenders fell out of bounds with Hammond, and the officials converged on the pile to see who had possession. They both signaled touchdown, and with 1.4 seconds to play, the Redskins had regained the lead, 36-31.

Lead changes hands four times in final 5 minutes, Liberal wins 36-31

Saturday, 26 October 2013 12:15

Goddard attempted four laterals on the ensuing kick-off, but the Redskins were able to make the tackle, and the celebration on the Liberal sideline began.

The win secured the first winning regular season for the Redskins since Tom Schroeder's Redskins earned five wins in 2008 and earned the team's first playoff berth since 2009.

Statistically, the Redskins dominated, racking up 534 yards on 69 plays while the Tigers managed 367 yards on 46 plays.

But the Tigers were able to score on special teams with a kick-off return for a touchdown in the first quarter and took advantage of a short field when Liberal failed to convert a fourth-and-two at their own 9 yard line.

Abbott ran for 261 yards on 41 carries and threw for 242 yards and four touchdowns. Hammond caught 10 passes for 199 yards and three touchdowns.

The District 8 championship between Liberal (5-3, 2-0) and Bishop Carroll (8-0, 2-0) will kick off at 7 p.m. Friday at Redskin Field.

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