

By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

After spending most of the season preventing other teams from scoring, Henry Vela got a chance to do some scoring of his own Tuesday in the first round of the Class 5A soccer playoffs, and the senior put three ball in the net to lead the Redskins to a 5-0 win over Goddard Eisenhower.

The Tigers tried to limit Liberal's scoring opportunities by packing in the defense around the goal. Eisenhower usually had eight or nine players around the box with one or two forwards. In the first 40 minutes, the ball rarely crossed into the Liberal side of the field while the Redskins fired shot after shot at goalkeeper Collin Dwornicki.

The Redskins attempted nine shots at the Goddard goal in the first half, but only one shot made it to the net, a header from Vela that floated over the hands of Dwornicki and into the goal.

But it was the second half when the Redskins opened the floodgates.

Vela received a pass from Eliel Gonzalez and beat Dwornicki high in the box. He then drifted the ball to the open net, and two Eisenhower defenders could not race back in time to keep the ball from crossing the goal, and the Redskins had a 2-0 lead.

Vela completed the hat trick with 23:49 to play when he received a pass from Jason Rios and put another ball into the back of the net for a 3-0 lead.

Eisenhower began to loosen up their defense in an attempt to score, but that gave the Redskins more opportunities, and Samuel Cruz took advantage with 20:40 to play when two Eisenhower defenders missed on a ball streaking down the middle of the field, and Cruz was able to beat Dwornicki for the goal and a 4-0 lead.

With 12:21 to play, Cruz put the final goal in the net on another breakaway, and the Redskins continued to keep the game on the Eisenhower half for most of the game in the win.

Liberal attempted 18 shots on goal while the Tigers only managed to attempts.

Liberal coach Lori Navarro expected the Redskins to put the ball in the goal when they have the chance, and the eight missed shots in the first half did not impress the future hall-of-fame coach.

“Against a good team you won’t get those opportunities In the first half I was disappointed we are not finishing shots. Every shot has to go in. We might not get that many. We picked it up in the second half and finished a lot better.”

Navarro opted to move Vela to the offensive side of the field to take advantage of his quickness.

“We need to utilize his speed,” she said. “That’s why he’s up there. In the first half, we kept giving him everything in the air, and the guy he was defended by was 6-2. We have to put the ball on the ground and let him chase them, he has speed. We did that in the second half. We have to clean those things up before Thursday.

The Redskins will travel to Wichita Thursday to face the private Catholic high school Kapaun. The Crusaders advanced with a 1-0 win over Wichita Heights.

“Kapaun has been a thorn in our side, and we are the same for them,” Navarro said. “Thursday will be a tough game. We have to do better than we did the first half.”

CLASS 5A PLAYOFF ROUND-UP

Central/South Central Region No. 1

No. 1 Carroll 3, No. 16 Ark City 1

No. 9 Goddard 3, No. 8 Salina Central 1

Central/South Central Region No. 2

No. 2 Maize South 8, No. 15 Valley Center 0

No. 7 Andover 2, No. 10 Wichita West 0

Central/South Central Region No. 3

No. 3 Kapaun 1, No. 14 Wichita Heights 0

No. 6 Liberal 5, No. 11 Eisenhower 0

Central/South Central Region No. 4

No. 4 Salina South 4, No. 13 Great Bend 2

No. 12 Hays 1, No. 5 Newton 0

Northeast Region No. 1

No. 1 KC Harmon 10, No. 16 Highland Park 0

No. 8 ST Aquinas 2, No. 9 Lansing 0

Northeast Region No. 2

No. 2 Topeka Seaman 8, No. 15 KC Washington 1

No. 7 Sh. Heights 2, No. 10 Topeka West 0

Northeast Region No. 3

No. 3 Mill Valley 8, No. 14 Leavenworth 1

No. 6 Blue Valley SW 5, No. 11 KC Turner 0

Northeast Region No. 4

No. 4 Pittsburg 5, No. 13 Emporia 3

No. 5 St. James 10, No. 12 KC Schlagle 0

Vela leads Liberal to playoff win

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