

By EARL WATT

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With the game already decided, Cliff Abbott took a time out to talk to his players in the fourth quarter.

The Redskins had been flagged for two unsportsmanlike penalties, and Abbott did not want to see any more.

He told his players no matter what was said to them they were not to respond. "Don't even look at them," he told them in the huddle.

Emotions were running high, something that has been used by Abbott to drive his team, but he also expected that emotion to be under control.

The bantering back and forth finally started to become physical.

"I hate to see that late," Abbott said. "It gives the image it was worse than it was."

Several times Abbott addressed specific players and told them to keep their mouths quiet and play. For some it was easier said than done.

While the chippiness may have reared its ugly head, Abbott had nothing but respect for the

quality of players that Carroll had on its roster.

“That is a very good team we played,” Abbott said. “They are a very mature, senior-led team. My hats off to them.”

While Carroll and its group of players from across the City of Wichita was churning out yards and executing their game plan, Abbott did not feel his team played to its potential.

“I don’t feel we played our best game,” he said. “We didn’t execute upfront. They had a three man line and we didn’t execute. I take full responsibility. It’s my job to make sure we are ready, and we weren’t. We will start in about 30 minutes to prepare. I thought we competed. It got a little chippy at the end, there was no profanity, but the officials wanted to tighten it down.”

For the past three years, the final regular season game ended Liberal’s season, but this year the Redskins have qualified for the post-season and will likely play Kapaun Friday.

“They still have another game,” Abbott said. “They are in the playoffs, and they are looking forward to that.”

While Abbott may not have been impressed with the execution of his team, he could not fault the effort.

“We competed hard,” he said. “We have to look at when they came back with counter strong, we weren’t making those tackles on the back side. We can correct that, it wasn’t a lack of effort. Good teams will run a counter. We will have an answer for that by Friday.”

Liberal had an advantage midway through the third quarter by outscoring Carroll 12-6 in the second half to that point, and Abbott believed that Liberal still had a chance to pull the upset.

“When it was 12-33, I felt we could score again, get 20-33, get an onside — we could get this done,” he said. “Our kids believed that too. We felt we had a chance until very late. I would be disappointed if this didn’t hurt.”

But for the Redskins, the hole was too deep.

The Redskins fell behind 27-0 in the first half, the only time all season Liberal did not score in the first half.

Abbott believed that Carroll’s defensive front made the difference.

“They had good linemen upfront bringing a lot of heat even when we were spreading it out,” he said. “They were bringing six, and they did a good job. When we scrambled and moved around it got our timing off a little bit. We have a scramble drill. But the difference was they didn’t spread with us, and they had good enough linemen to pull it off.”

With the regular season behind them, the Redskins can now focus on the playoffs, and the additional week of practice is not only good for this years team but will provide the foundation for next year’s Redskins by gaining another game of experience.

“This bunch is excited to have that opportunity to represent Liberal,” Abbott said. “We are looking forward to it.”

The Redskins will open on the road due to being the District 8 runner-up while Carroll will open at home.

“If we both win in the playoffs, we will see them again,” Abbott said.

