



By EARL WATT

- Leader & Times

Hayden Coker scored the last two baskets for the Redskins in Garden City Tuesday. Too bad there was a five-minute scoring drought in between.

Liberal watched a four-point lead with five minutes to play disappear, and Garden City finished the game with a 14-2 run to defeat the Redskins 42-34.

Both teams struggled on offense, but the Angry Red defense kept the Buffaloes in check for three-and-a-half quarters.

But the Redskins offense struggled to get the ball across mid-court without turning it over down the stretch, and the Buffaloes were able to turn the steals into lay-ups.

Still, Garden City missed easy shots in the waning moments, but the Redskins continued to give the Buffaloes second chances by sending them to the free throw line or committing turnovers.

By the time Coker hit the final shot of the night for the Redskins, Liberal trailed by eight.

The Redskins jumped out to a 10-5 lead before the Buffaloes pulled to within one, 10-9.

Liberal pushed out to a 17-11 lead midway through the fourth quarter with a free throw from Elmer Quintana and four straight at the line from Britton Abbott.

Garden City again closed the lead to one, 17-16 before Abbott hit a runner in the lane and Cade Hinkle hit one of two free throws after Garden City's Hunter Delgado tangled with Nolan Larkin and was called for a technical.

Jared Koster hit a three for the Buffaloes, and after Abbott missed the front end of a one-and-one and followed with one of two free throws on Liberal's next possession.

Tristan Nanninga hit a basket for Garden City to tie the game with 17 seconds to play in the half, and after a Liberal turnover on the inbounds play, the Buffaloes were unable to capitalize, and the game was tied at half.

Garden City's Mitchell Hernandez hit a three to open the second half, but Jared Hasik answered for the Redskins, and the two remained within a basket the rest of the third quarter. By the time the fourth quarter started, the game was still tied, 28-28.

Blake Stout started the fourth quarter with two free throws, and Coker added a basket to give the Redskins a 32-28 lead with 5:15 to play.

But the Redskins collapsed on offense, and Garden City ended on a 14-2 run for the 42-34 win.

"I'll take full blame," Liberal coach Scott Hinkle said. "We need to work on late game situations. I told the players, 'This loss is on me.' We are going to go back to the drawing board and prepare for late games. We have to take care of the basketball late. When we get pressure we get tight and turn it over. I take full blame for not having us prepared for late game situations."

Liberal did have a chance late with some breakaways of their own, but the lay-ups didn't fall.

"We missed some easy shots late," Hinkle said. "I know we had a couple steals we didn't convert. You have to have those in a game like this. I told the guys we have to steal one on the road. We felt we could steal this one, but we let it slip through."

Coker scored 10 points to lead the Redskins. Abbott had seven, and Hasik added six.

Liberal (2-6, 0-2) will prepare for the Orange and Black Classic in Colby that begins Jan. 23.

WAC STANDINGS

WAC ALL

Hays 2-0 8-0

Dodge City 1-0 3-3

Garden City 2-1 5-3

Liberal 0-2 2-6

Great Bend 0-2 1-5

Tuesday's Games

Garden City 42, Liberal 34

Hays 70, Great Bend 25