

By EARL WATT • Daily Leader



To make the Liberal Redskin and Lady Redskin bowling team takes the top averages on competition dates set by coach Robert Burkey.

Landry Mastellar might have wished that Tuesday was one of those dates.

The Redskin senior bowled a 300 during practice. Although it is a great feat, Burkey referred to the accomplishment as “bowling 12 strikes in a row.”

“What we are doing is practicing,” he said. “We work on getting better every day. Until you bowl that in a game that counts, it’s only practice.”

Mastellar was excited about his 300. As he neared the perfect game, his teammates began to gather around his lane.

“They were putting the pressure on me,” Mastellar said. “I was nervous and excited. I never thought I would do it in my life.”

The perfect game may be a positive sign of things to come for the Redskins this season. Both teams won Western Athletic Conference titles last year, and that is a minimum for this year’s teams.

“Anything less than a WAC championship is failure,” Mastellar said.

His teammates agreed, but also expected to qualify as a team for the state tournament for the first time.

“Our main focus is getting to state as a team,” Chris Flowers said.

Flowers has been bowling on the team since the program began, and he narrowly missed a trip to state last year. His experience should be an asset for the younger bowlers this season.

“I know the places where we are going to bowl,” he said. “I can help with the differences between synthetics and woods. I can let them know when they need to move a board or two.”

Brandon Granger qualified for state last year, but he, too, wanted to see the team make the trip together.

“That’s what we’re striving for,” he said. “That’s our No. 1 goal.”

The Lady Redskins won WAC in a runaway last year and the entire team is returning to make another run this season.

Senior Brittany Odle has traded in her volleyball knee pads for the stylish bowling shoes in an attempt to get to repeat as conference champions and get the team to state.

“The WAC tournament won’t be at our house , so we won’t have the pump of the screaming fans like we did last year,” Odle said. “Dodge City has a rowdy crowd, and it’s going to be tough, but I think we can do it.”

Heather Vanley is another senior on the team, and she said the competition of bowling is different than some of her other activities.

“It’s fun to compete against other people,” she said.

Burkey is expecting both of his teams to win the WAC this year.

“Our girls will be even stronger than last year, and they won it last year,” he said. “The boys squeaked through last year. It was on our home field last year. This year it will be at Dodge City.”

Bowling continues to grow as a high school sport, and this year 44 teams will be competing for the Class 5A and under state championship.

Liberal begins the season Jan. 10 in Wichita against Bishop Carroll before returning home to face Garden City in the home opener Jan. 17.