

By EARL WATT

I feel for the Guymon Tigers. Liberal has been where they are.

How many times during the past few years did the Redskins step up against an opponent that might be better, and play well enough to win, and yet see the game slip away in the final minutes?

It happened to the Redskins with regularity in the past few seasons.

The Redskins had a strong Bishop Carroll team on the ropes three years ago. The Redskins had a 15-point lead and lost. Last year, Liberal had leads against Hays and Great Bend and lost.

But there seems to be a different atmosphere around this group of Redskins.

Friday night, Liberal clearly expected to win.

Vince Lombardi said, "Winning isn't everything it is the only thing. Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing."

While this Redskin group may not have experienced a lot of winning, they are learning how to win.

Down by 11 points with 3:38 to play, the Redskins still believed they were going to win.

I didn't. I thought it was over.

Not that I am not a believer. It just didn't seem like our night. Too many penalties. Too many turnovers. You usually don't overcome that many mistakes.

Needing to score twice with one time out and the clock running out, the odds were not in Liberal's favor. At one point, another first down for the Tigers would have done it.

But the Redskins continued to battle.

It's almost cliché to hear coach Wade Standley talk about a group of fighters on his team each week.

But it is true.

They never gave up, even though they couldn't swing momentum for three and a half quarters. They never quit when everything was going right for the Tigers.

They never quit when fumbles were returned for touchdowns, and the deficit grew.

No matter what the challenge, the Redskins just went about thinking how to overcome the new challenge.

In the end, the Redskins took a step toward forming a new habit — winning. Even when maybe

the mistakes and the stats say you shouldn't have won. Even when passes fell incomplete and balls were fumbles.

Here's the thing: not every pass is going to be completed. There will be turnovers.

The big question, as it is in life, is how will you react to the challenge. How will you respond to adversity?

The fact is, with the number of times that Liberal was snake-bit Friday night, it would have been easy to have come to the conclusion that it was just not your night.

But they never did.

I fully expect the Redskins will work on the issues that plagued the team Friday. But good teams find a way to overcome, and they make winning a habit.