



Liberal's Cade Hinkle dribbles around Bishop Carroll's Luke Evans Thursday night in The Big House during the first round of the Class 5A Sub State playoffs. No. 2 Liberal was upset by the Golden Eagles, 52-45. L&T photo/Earl Watt

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Many in The Big House had seen it before. At any moment, the Redskins would rally for a come-from-behind win like they had so many other times.

Liberal did rally, cutting a seven-point deficit in the final minute to just two, but the Redskins could never take the lead, and Bishop Carroll was able to escape The Big House with a 52-45 Sub State win.

It was a disappointing night for a team that had such high expectations after qualifying for the

State Tournament a year ago, winning back-to-back Western Athletic Conference championships and putting together an 18-2 regular season.

Liberal's sure-handed guards committed one-on-one turnovers, and shot after shot clanked off the rim. Liberal ended the night shooting 38 percent.

Early turnovers allowed Bishop Carroll to build a first-quarter lead, but Cade Hinkle was able to connect on two three pointer to keep the Redskins within five, 13-8.

Carroll built a seven-point lead in the second quarter, but a Kaiden Bigham three cut the lead back to four.

A late foul call with only 0.2 seconds left in the half allowed Carroll to take a 24-18 lead at half.

Carroll started the second half with a basket and an eight-point lead, but the Redskins again shot back and cut the lead to three.

Kylan Thomas scored a basket to cut Carrolls lead to one, and Alex Carrillo had a chance to give the Redskins a lead with two free throws, but he missed both.

Carroll drained a three to take a four-point lead, and again the Redskins went to work at keeping the score close.

Carroll's Adam Thies hit two more threes early in the fourth quarter, and Carroll again had an eight-point lead, 41-33.

Liberal again rallied, and with 35.2 seconds to play had cut the lead back to two, 47-45, and on the inbounds play, Liberal knocked the ball loose, but Carroll was able to collect the loose ball,

and the Redskins couldn't get any closer in a 52-45 loss.

Hinkle led the Redskins with 14 points. Thomas had 11.

"We told them this is a group that will punch you in the mouth," Liberal coach Scott Hinkle said. "They punched us, and it took us a while to respond. We had our chances. We missed some free throws, some shots down low, but we battled back. We could have folded our tent."

The loss ended the careers for 10 seniors.

"I've been fortunate to coach these guys," Hinkle said. "It's been a pleasure and a blessing for me. It just didn't go our way tonight."

For Hinkle, he has been coaching many of these players through traveling basketball and their high school careers.

"I love every one of them," he said. "They've been such a good group. They have laid the foundation for a winning program. They have great leadership on and off the court. We want them to continue that in their lives outside of basketball. They are like family to me. This isn't how we wanted to end it, but it is part of life."

And for his senior son who suffered the emotion of having it all end, the two had a special moment.

"I grabbed him before he came in the locker room, and said, 'I love ya,'" Hinkle said. "He said he loved me too. This isn't how we wanted it to end."