

No. 4 Redskins 'fall apart' in loss to Sunrise Academy in OT

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Daily Leader photo/Rustin Watt

Kevin Livingston puts his jersey on his head Friday while Sunrise Academy celebrates after knocking off Liberal 49-46 in overtime. The Redskins had a 37-23 lead with five minutes to play, but turnovers and missed shots down the stretch proved costly.

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By EARL WATT

• Daily Leader

When Kevin Livingston drained a three-pointer with 5:02 to play, he gave the Redskins a 37-23 lead, and the Redskins appeared to be on their way to another home victory.

Instead, Liberal limped out of the Big House Friday night with a 49-46 overtime loss to a talented Sunrise Academy (12-1).

The shocked expressions on the players and fans alike told the story. While Liberal went ice cold in the final five minutes of regulation, Sunrise was blistering hot.

"We fell apart there," Liberal coach Drew Gruver said. "We turned the ball over. We had the lead and had it under control. We had four turnovers, we threw it out of bounds, they had steals."

Sunrise cut in to Liberal's 14-point lead, and in a minute they had cut the deficit in half to 37-30.

Livingston made another basket to extend the Redskin advantage to nine, but another seven-point Sunrise run, which included three free throws narrowed the Redskin advantage to 39-37 with 1:15 to play. Alex Gilmore was fouled and made both free throws with 44.3 seconds to play to give the Redskins a four-point lead, 41-37.

But a basket by Tamiko McKinney with 23.1 seconds left brought Sunrise back to within two, 41-39.

Livingston was fouled with 8.7 seconds left, but he missed the front end of a one-and-one, and Sunrise standout BJ Bonamy connected with 1 second to play to tie the game..

The Redskins made a desperation half-court pass that was intercepted by Sunrise, and a shot clanked off the front of the rim to send the game to overtime.

Sunrise jumped out to a 4-41 lead, but Livingston and Gilmore hit back-to-back baskets to give the Redskins a 45-44 lead.

Sunrise jumped back out to a 47-45 lead with 36 seconds to play, and Jade Cathey was fouled with 17 seconds remaining with a chance to tie the game. Cathey made one of two, but Sunrise touched the ball before it went out of bounds, and the Redskins had a shot at the win.

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Livingston was called for a travel in the lane with 4.2 seconds to play. Sunrise threw a home run pass to Matt Fager who made a lay-up with 2.1 seconds to play. The Redskins again attempted a half-court pass but it was also intercepted by Sunrise to end the game.

"As a coach I have to do a better job of getting them prepared," Gruver said. "We let them get too many offensive rebounds. Those leads to points. It's not always the first shot, it's the second one that can kill you."

Although the Redskins dominated Sunrise for most of the game, Gruver gave credited to the Academy.

"Sunrise is a well-coached team," he said. "They are talented and athletic. They have some big guys. They stress defense. They got after us and caused us some trouble."

While the game seemed to come down to plays at the end, Liberal abandoned the inside game early, settling for perimeter shots that did not fall. After the first quarter the Redskins had a 5-4 lead which included a lone basket by Redskin post Eric Brown.

"We could have done better running our offense early in the game," Gruver said. "We didn't look to get it inside as much. We've been working on that at practice. We have to get back to that. We obviously weren't hitting from outside. We took some quick shots. We have to make them play defense for a little while, then reverse the ball and work it inside out. When the outside shots aren't happening, we have to work to get it inside."