

By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

When the Ulysses Tigers rallied in the second half and the Redskins saw a familiar pattern of competing in the first half but faltering in the second, Cliff Abbott saw his team do something that changed the pattern.

His team responded by executing the offense and the game plan. The result was a 56-41 come-from-behind win over an opponent that has been a thorn in the Redskins side for a decade.

“It was our senior leadership,” Abbott said. “These kids have been in the fire, playing as freshmen and sophomores. Not only in the game, but the summer, the winter, they were telling their teammates, ‘We aren’t where we want to be, let’s do better.’ We left a couple scores on the field. We left a lot out there and at halftime, we talked about being up and feeling good — this halftime speech was a lot different than last year. They are very capable. They did a great job on that first drive, and I knew we were in a ball game. We had to go 99 yards. It was a defining moment — big plays made by players who believed they could do it.”

Opting to go for two when trailing 41-40 was a gutsy call, followed by another gutsy call on the onside that followed. Both worked for the Redskins.

“We took a time to talk this thing over. We wanted to make sure this is what we need to do to give the Redskins the best chance for success.

“I thought about going for one, and the coaches in the box said, ‘We are going to own the ball.’ We went for two. We stayed the course, and it worked out well for us.”

That commitment to controlling the ball was a strategy that Abbott and his coaching staff used throughout the game.

“We went into this game thinking that we want to own the ball and be very aggressive,” Abbott said. “You have a 50-50 chance if the ball stays in bounds on an onside. We have a strong kicker. He can put it in the end zone, but you only have a 2 percent chance of getting it back.”

Abbott also committed to going for two-point conversions, and the pressure worked for the Redskins by building a nine-point lead late that put the Tigers out of reach.