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By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

ULYSSES — When momentum switched to the Ulysses Tigers in the second half Friday night, and the Redskins watched their 15-point lead disappear, something that hasn't happened in more than four seasons changed Liberal's fate.

They rallied.

Despite six straight scoring drives by Ulysses, Liberal scored 22 unanswered points in the fourth quarter to earn a 56-41 win, the first win in a season opener for Liberal since 2009.

Liberal showcased a devastating passing attack and high-paced offense that resulted in 35 completions for 475 yards and four touchdowns and only one interception.

All of those except one came from Britton Abbot, but the one completion from Nolan Larkin to Trenton Hammond on a pitch pass turned in to a 50-yard bomb for a touchdown.

Ulysses completed one pass for 19 yards.

Strategies that coach Cliff Abbott implemented for the season turned out to be critical after Ulysses erased the 28-13 Redskin lead at halftime and took a 41-34 lead of their own after intercepting an Abbott pass that sailed over the head of Lorenza Pando and into the arms of Ulysses' Riley Seger.

The Tigers went 32 yards on two plays to take the lead.

The Redskins started on their own 11 yard line on the next possession and went on an 89-yard, 10 play drive that ended with a two-yard plunge into the end zone for Abbott that put the Redskins down by only one, 41-40.

Liberal opted to go for two.

"I really thought about kicking it and tying it up," Abbott said. "But the guys in the booth said to go for two. I was humbled by that, and we went for two."

Pando caught a pass for the conversion, and the Redskins had a one-point lead.

The second commitment that the Redskins kept was sticking with onside kicks.

Ulysses was called for a personal foul on the two point conversion, which moved the Redskin kick-off to the Tiger 45 yard line.

Alan Fraire kicked a line drive to the left side, and a Tiger stepped in to catch the ball in an attempt to break through for a fast score, but the ball bounced off the chest of the Tiger, and the Redskins recovered the loose ball.

Five plays and 42 yards later, the Redskins were back in the end zone with a 14-yard touchdown pass from Abbott to Payton Grant. The conversion failed, but the Redskins had a 50-41 lead.

Ulysses stuck to a stinging ground game on its next possession and moved the ball from their own 40 to the Redskin 21 yard line when they faced a fourth and 13.

Tiger quarterback Garrett Walters sent a pass to the end zone, but Hammond stepped in front of the receiver two yards inside the end zone and intercepted the ball. Hammond side-stepped two Tiger defenders and ran 70 yards to the Tiger 30 yard line before Ian Rudzik made a touchdown-saving tackle.

But it only delayed the score.

The Redskins slowed down their high-octane offense, and Abbott carried four straight times including a two-yard plunge into the end zone for a 56-41 lead.

Ulysses had one more chance to score, but after completing a 19-yard pass, Walters bobbled a snap that bounced to his side, and as he tried to crawl to the ball, Dustin Friederich leapfrogged the Walters, landed on the ball, and the Redskins secured the win.

"It was huge," quarterback Abbott said. "We worked for it, we deserve it. I am proud of my teammates, they played a heck of a game. Trenton was catching everything, the line was blocking. It was a great team effort."

Hammond ended the night with 11 receptions for 183 yards and four touchdowns.

"It feels good that I have a quarterback that can find someone when they are open," Hammond

said. "We've been working on this for three years."

And even longer.

Abbott and Hammond are in their sixth season together, and have ben under the leadership of coach Abbott the entire time.

"Trenton is a heck of a receiver," Britton Abbott said. "He's No. 1 in the state for a reason. I haven't seen anyone one-on-one that can cover him."

Even when Hammond put the Redskins in a tough spot after taking a Ulysses kick-off and getting tackled at the 1 yard line, the Redskin offense was able to take the field and drive 99 yards in 14 plays that ended with a six-yard touchdown pass to Hammond.

Liberal (1-0) will host Guymon (0-1) at 7 p.m. Friday.

INDIVIDUAL □ STATS

Liberal

Rushing

Abbott — 33-153-3, Hasik — 7-24-0, Symons — 1-0-0, Altamarino — 1-0-0

High-steppin' Hammond unstoppable in 56-41 Redskin win

Saturday, 07 September 2013 10:16

Passing

Abbott — 34-48-425-4-1, Larkin — 1-1-50-1-0

Receiving — Hammond — 11-183-4, Pando — 7-106-0, Erives — 7-79-0, Larkin — 7-77-0, Grant — 1-14-1, Hasik — 1-13-0, Fraire — 1-3-0

TEAM STATS

Total offense — 628 yards

Ulysses

Rushing

Romero — 18-161-2, Rudzik, 20-123-3, Walters — 6-36-1, Seger — 4-31-0, Rodriguez — 1-1-0

Passing

Walters — 1-3-19-0-1

Receiving

Romero — 1-19-0

TEAM STATS

Total offense — 371 yards

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