



By EARL WATT

- Leader & Times

The fine-tuned offensive machine of the Redskins was missing a key gear Friday night, and it showed.

Liberal struggled to move the ball on offense without Trenton Hammond, one of the top receivers in the state who was suspended from playing for violating school rules, and Liberal dropped the homecoming match-up with Garden City, 61-20.

Liberal's strategy all year has been to keep the offense on the field as much as possible, but without the threat of the deep ball to Abbott, and several dropped passes by other receivers, Liberal could not sustain drives.

But when the Buffaloes had the ball, they had no trouble stampeding to the end zone, mostly on the legs of quarterback Peyson Tempel who gashed the Redskin defense for more than 330 yard on the ground.

Tempel ran the option-read with perfection, handing off when his read key stayed home, and pulling the ball out and sweeping to big gains when the read key bit on the running back.

Tempel passed just enough to keep the Redskin defensive backs from keying too much on the run by hitting Caleb Tramp for two touchdown passes, one with a strong wind t his back and the other into the teeth of the bitter northern breeze.

Liberal, however, had few big plays, and the dropped balls forced drives to end deep in Redskin territory.

Garden City used a strong wind at their back to perfection in the first quarter.

The Buffaloes scored three times in the opening period, and their worst field position was their own 49 yard line.

Liberal had four first quarter possessions, two ending in punts, another turned over on downs at their own 35 yard line, but the fourth was a scoring drive that went 80 yards on 10 plays including a reverse pass from Nolan Larkin to Merhsek Wiltshire for 37 yards and a 16-yard touchdown run from Rex Heronemus.

The teams traded touchdowns to start the second quarter including a 20-yard pass from Britton Abbott to Blake Stout who attempted to pick fill the hole left by Hammond.

Garden City recovered the ensuing onside, and on the first play form scrimmage Tempel broke loose on a 49-yard run for a touchdown to give the Buffaloes a 35-14 lead.

Two Liberal possessions later, Abbott was intercepted, and the Buffaloes put together a nine-play, 71-yard drive that needed no third downs to score another touchdown and take a 41-14 lead.

Shorthanded Redskins crushed 61-20

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Abbott threw another interception on the next drive at the 48 yard line, and that was just the end of the first half.

Garden City continued to score at will in the second half, starting with a short kick-off into the win that was returned to the 42 yard line, and 58 yards and nine plays later, The Buffaloes were back in the end zone with a 17-yard pass from Tempel to Tramp and a 47-14 Garden City lead.

Liberal attempted to convert a fourth and four at its own 26 yard line, but the Heronemus run came up one yard short.

Four plays later, Tempel was back in the end zone with a 17-yard touchdown run and a 55-14 lead.

Liberal opened the fourth quarter with a promising drive, but a reception by Alan Fraire was fumbled at the Garden City 14 yard line.

Tempel took the first snap, found an opening on the right side of the Redskin defense, cut through the middle of the field and reversed back to the left and outran the Redskins to the end zone for an 86-yard touchdown and a 61-14 lead.

Liberal recovered a Garden City fumble at the Buffalo 42 yard line and was able to tack on a late score after a 27-yard reception to Lorenzo Pando set up a one-yard plunge by Abbott.

Garden City's reserves were able to holed the ball for the final five minutes after recovering the ensuing onside for the 61-20 final.

The game was the third consecutive without recovering an onside.

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Liberal committed three turnovers in one game for the first time all season.

Not only did the Redskins play without Hammons, but Eli Altamarino was also withheld from the game for violating school rules, and early in the second half, standout Nolan Larkin left the game with an unspecified leg injury and did not return.

Liberal (3-2) will travel to Great Bend to face the Panthers (3-2) Friday. Great Bend suffered a loss to Dodge City Friday, 48-13.