

By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Sitting on the bench with two early fouls, Jai Chapman put coach Bill Baird and the Lady Redskins in a tough spot.



When the game appeared to be slipping away early, Baird put Chapman back in, and she immediately picked up her third.

Holcomb took advantage by forcing Liberal to turn the ball over, and the Lady Redskins lost the season opener, 71-47.

“We turned the ball over massively, and that was the biggest difference,” Baird said. “It was not rebounding, we got in foul trouble. We didn’t have a point guard with Jai out of the game. The other girls played hard. We are better from top to bottom. But you have that many turnovers, you won’t win.”

Last year, Chapman was able to play with fouls and avoid picking up the third, and that gave Baird the confidence to put her back in with two first-quarter fouls.

“She got second foul, I sat her down,” Baird said. “The game was slipping when I really wanted to keep her on the bench. I put her back in and she gets a third, and I had to take her out the rest of the half. Last year she controlled her fouls pretty good. I didn’t think she would get that

third one.”

Holcomb was able to hit a half-court three at the end of the first quarter and jumped out to a 13-point lead at half.

At that point, Baird believed Liberal still had a shot.

“We were still in the game, but in the second half, they simply were better than us,” Baird said. “I didn’t realize with all these fouls, they had (Taylor Deniston) score 28 points — all at the rim, and she wasn’t a post. Nine came from the free throw line, she hit a half court shot and had a couple of threes.”

With Deniston shooting lights out, and the Lady Redskins committing reaching fouls, the game started to get away from the Lady Redskins in a hurry.

“They out-executed us,” Baird said. “I think they are a very good team. I don’t think they were that much better than us, it just got away from us a little bit. Offensively we had a presence. Defensively we are reaching too much. We gave them too many more shots, too many more possessions.”

Chapman scored 14 to lead the Lady Redskins with limited playing time.

“We have to get to the basket more,” Baird said.

Baird was pleased with the play of junior Carly Shelton even though she only scored three points.

“She dove and rebounded well,” he said. “I was impressed with her play. Kelly Ramirez played

good, Kambrie Long had a lot of rebounds.”

The Lady Redskins will host Guymon Tuesday in the home opener, and Baird said that the key will be pressuring the point guard and doing a better job against a zone defense.

Tipoff is scheduled for 6 p.m. in the Big House.