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By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

The first nine points came relatively easy for the Redskin Tuesday night against Ulysses, but the rest were much harder.

Liberal lost an early lead and had to rally for a 40-30 win in a defensive battle.

Britton Abbott led the Redskins with nine points despite early foul trouble that forced the senior to the bench midway through the first quarter and kept him there until the second half.

Abbott helped spark an early run for the Redskins. Liberal trailed 3-0 when Abbott was fouled on a lay-up. He made the basket and the free throw to tie the game. Nolan Larkin followed with a runner along the baseline, and Abbott again penetrated the lane for another basket. Hayden Coker added a mid-range jumper, and the Redskin jumped out to a 9-3 lead.

But the Redskins did not score for the next four minutes, and the Tigers responded with a 10-0 run including a 6-for-6 performance at the free throw line to take a 13-9 lead.

“In the first half when we were stuck on nine, we were getting shots, just not getting them to fall,” Liberal coach Scott Hinkle said. “Collin Ware knocked down a couple threes, Elmer hit one, Blake got one, I thought we did a better job of being patient.”

The Redskin defense took over in the final six minutes of the second quarter and only allowed one basket for the Tigers while the Redskin offense reeled off nine points to take an 18-15 lead at half.

But points would be just as difficult to find in the second half as they were in the first for both teams.

With Abbott back on the floor, the Redskins jumped out early in the third quarter with two baskets from Coker and one from Abbott, and Liberal had a 24-15 lead.

The Tigers tried some long-range shots that missed the mark, but they rebounded and made some short put-back baskets, and with 6:45 to play the Tigers were within four, 28-24.

Coker added a free throw, and the Tigers hit another second-chance basket to cut the Redskin lead to three, 29-26.

But the Redskins were able to make nine of 16 free throws in the final three-and-a-half minutes to secure the 40-30 win.

“We needed this, in a bad way,” Hinkle said. “I appreciated the team effort. We stepped up and hit some big free throws. We haven’t been in this situation where it’s tight. I thought the guys

handled the adversity very well.”

Having to preserve the win at the is something that Hinkle hopes pays off later.

“We’re going to see that in the conference, that kind of play,” he said. “We haven’t had that situation. To see them step up and take care of business, it was tense at times, but they hit big free thows when they needed to. We knew they would have to start fouling us.”

Abbott led the Redskins with nine points, Coker had eight and Quintana also added eight.

The Redskins (2-4) will travel to Hays (6-0) Friday to open the Western Athletic Conference schedule. The game is scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

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