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By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Liberal Redskin football has a long list of legendary players and legendary plays.

Caleb Cline's name falls under both.

Now, Cline will take his hard-nosed approach at the helm of the Redskin program. Cline was selected as the next head coach of the Redskins, pending USD No. 480 Board approval Feb. 10.

Cline will replace Cliff Abbott who was released after the 2013 season.

As a defensive specialist, Cline wreaked havoc on the opposition, and of all the plays, none were more memorable than "The Strip" in 2001.

Liberal hosted Bishop Carroll in a late-season match-up that would determine a playoff berth. When Cline played, only one team qualified from each district.

Carroll had their backs against their own goal when they completed a short pass over the middle. The receiver broke free and headed toward the goal line. Cline never stopped chasing the Golden Eagle and finally caught him at the 3 yard line. Instead of tackling him, Cline punched the ball out of the receiver's hands, and the ball went out of the back of the end zone, giving the Redskins the ball and helping preserve a 21-19 Liberal win.

The play became known as "The Strip," and joined a host of plays from Hail Marys to defensive stands that made the Redskins program legendary.

Cline has been the defensive coordinator since 2011 and is in his fourth year at the helm of the Redskin track program.

"Coach Cline has a passion for the game of football; however, he has a greater passion for our community and our students," LHS Athletic Director Roland Van Wyhe said. "He has a great relationship with our student-athletes."

Cline played for Gary Cornelsen who won 26 state championships in boys track (13) girls track (nine) and football (four) in 13 years of coaching. Cline was a part of both the track and football programs under Cornelsen. While he was a student, Liberal won four boys track titles.

"Coach Cline's dedication to LHS and its students really stood out during the interview process," Human Resource Director Jason McAfee said. "Not only is coach Cline an excellent coach, which is evidenced by his past experience in football and track, but he also has a passion for developing the character of the students he comes in contact with."

Under Cline, Liberal has finished in the top five at the state track meet the past two years, and he has been able to increase the number of athletes participating in the program.

Cline takes over Redskin football

Tuesday, 28 January 2014 11:45

“I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to continue the rich tradition at Liberal High School which has enormous meaning to me and my family,” Cline said. “Our duty is to ensure that the Liberal High School football program reflects and enhances the academic mission of USD 480. I take great pride in the history, tradition and passion for Liberal High School football; we will work diligently toward increasing the success, reputation and integrity created by our players, students, community, coaches and administration. It is, and always will be, a Great Day to be a Redskin.”

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