By EARL WATT

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With Liberal clinging to a three-point game late, Muskogee fired up a shot to tie the game.

The ball clanked off the rim, and Ryan Petty snagged the rebound. He dished it out to Berakah Carter who was fouled, and after the senior sank both shots, the Redskins had finally put the game out of reach.

Kevin Livingston added two more free throws with less than a second to play, and the Redskins earned a 48-41 win in the final game of the Conestoga Classic.

“There was a lot of pushing,” Petty said. “We worked on it this morning in our shoot-around.”

There was no doubt the Roughers provided the most physical challenge of the year.

“There’s not even a comparison,” Petty said.

The Redskins put the clamps on the Roughers on the defensive side in the first half. Liberal had a 30-14 lead at the break.

But the Roughers came out even more aggressive in the second half.

and Liberal's lead began to evaporate.

"They came out and basically started playing harder," Petty said.

"Sometimes we didn't get guys boxed out."

Muskogee held the Redskins t five third quarter points and scored 16 of their own including a three-pointer at the buzzer to narrow the gap to 35-30.

Muskogee continued to dig into the Redskins' lead and with 3:46 to play the Roughers took a 39-38 lead.

But the Redskins regrouped, and Livingston connected on two free throws to put Liberal ahead 41-39.

Both teams struggled to score over the next two minutes, including two missed free throws by Muskogee that would have tied the game.

Livingston also missed a pair for the Redskins.

But he atoned with a basket with 1:28 to give the Redskins a 43-39 edge.

Muskogee narrowed the deficit to two with 1:08 to play and had another chance to tie the game at the line. Again, the Roughers missed both shots.

Eric Brown went to the line and made one of two with 38.7 seconds to play to put Liberal ahead

44-41.

That's when Muskogee missed a three-pointer and Petty grabbed the rebound and dished the ball to Carter.

"It was a good game, a good test for us," Liberal coach Drew Gruver said. "Our guys handled it pretty well. We had that big lead, and we wanted to build on that. You have to credit Muskogee. They are a good team and got back to doing what they do."

In the first competitive game of the season, the Redskins had to rally after giving up a big lead, and the Redskins did enough down the stretch to secure the win.

"I credit the guys for keeping composure when Muskogee took the lead," Gruver said. "They did a good job to do what they needed to do to get a win."

Livingston led the Redskins with 17 points, and Eric Brown scored nine. Jade Cathey had eight points as did Carter.

The win advanced Liberal to 4-0, and Gruver said it was the defense that earned the victory.

"We did a good job of playing defense in the first half," he said.

"We were getting to the help side. We did a great job of rebounding.

In the third quarter we got away from that. We let them get easy baskets.

“Late in the game we picked it back up.”