

By EARL WATT

• Daily Leader

Redskin Field might as well have been hosting a FIFA World Cup match Tuesday.

The largest crowd to watch a high school soccer game in Liberal turned out for the Western Athletic Conference contest between Liberal and Dodge City, and the Redskin fans were treated to a physical thriller that ended with a 2-1 Liberal win.

In the final 10 seconds of the game, the fans counted down the clock in Spanish.

The win was critical for Liberal's chances to repeat as WAC champ. Last year, Liberal and Dodge City shared the title. It was the first time Liberal had to share the WAC title with anyone for almost a decade.

"Any time we play Dodge it is very competitive," Liberal head coach Lorri Navarro said.

Dodge scored the first goal of the game in the first six minutes of the first half, but Liberal responded with a breakaway shot by Auden Portillo.

The game was highlighted with yellow cards for both sides in a shoving match on virtually every contested ball.

Moreno scored late goal, Liberal defeats Dodge City 2-1

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“Both sides are trying to control the ball, but several fell, and it was being called,” Navarro said. “The officials were trying to keep control of the game, but it was taking the rhythm of the game away.”

Most of the first half, the Redskins were playing defense. But in the second half, Liberal picked up the pressure, and the result was the only goal of the second half.

“We were content hanging back in the first half,” Navarro said. “We had to pressure the ball and play our style.”

While several shots missed the mark, a pass from Jose Flores to Eduardo moreno led to a strong kick from the right side that headed high toward the goal. Dodge City’s keep dove but had no chance to reach the ball that sailed to the back of the net for a 2-1 Liberal lead.

“We weren’t getting many touches in the first half,” Moreno said. “coach told us what to do to open the ball up, and it worked.”

Freddie Gomez returned to the goal after suffering an injury in Wichita last week, and his presence in the final six minutes was critical in preserving the win.

“I was glad to see him back in there,” Navarro said.

Liberal will continue WAC action Thursday when Garden City comes to Liberal, but getting the upper hand on Dodge City early was key.

“We didn’t like sharing last year,” Liberal coach Lorri Navarro said. “The title is ours. We still have a lot of work to do, starting with Garden City Thursday.”

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