By EARL WATT

• Daily Leader

With five starters out of the line-up Friday night, the Liberal Redskins had little success slowing down the Garden City Buffaloes. The defense was shredded without two starting linebackers and two cornerbacks, and the Buffaloes scored their highest point total of the season, knocking off the Redskins 38-14.

Liberal’s young defense held up early, forcing Garden City to convert two fourth downs on its first drive of the game. But the Buffaloes were able to maintain possession and ended the drive with a one-yard touchdown run to take an early 7-0 lead.

Liberal’s offense had its chances in the first quarter to score and possibly take the lead.

Liberal’s first possession started with flare when Slader McVey hit Jade Cathey for a 33-yard gain. McVey followed with a 14-yard scramble to give the Redskins the ball at the Buffalo 18 yard line.

But a pass to Cathey was intercepted by the Buffaloes in the end zone to end the Redskin drive.

On the next Liberal possession Liberal again had a promising drive. The Redskins advanced the ball to the Buffaloes 30 yard line before an Isaac Gallegos fumble was recovered by Garden City at the 32.

The Redskin defense was able to force a Garden City punt, and the Redskins were able to tie

the game with a nine-play, 66-yard drive that featured the Wildcat offense with Justin McPhail taking the direct snap and plunging through the line for a four-yard touchdown run.

But the Buffaloes answered with a six-play, 67-yard scoring drive to take a 14-7 lead.

Liberal had a three-and-out that resulted in a punt tot he Garden City 32.

The Liberal defense was starting to wear down late in the first half, and the Buffaloes converted two third downs and marched 68 yards in 10 plays to reach the end zone with a screen pass for a 21-7 lead with 17 seconds to play before half.

Garden City scored on the first possession of the second half despite starting on their own 8 yard line.

After the Buffaloes gained 10 yards on their first two plays, the Buffalo tailback broke through the middle of the line and appeared to be free for an 82-yard touchdown run.

But Michael Sena never gave up on the play and closed in on the Buffalo runner. Sena made the tackle at the 7 yard line, but it only delayed the score. Garden broke the middle of the Redskins defense on the next play to take a 2 8-7 lead.

The Redskins continued to hurt themselves on the first possession of the second half when McVey dropped back to pass and five Buffaloes breached the front line. McVey tried to evade the pressure but was crushed by the five Buffaloes, and on his way to the turf a Garden City defender ripped the ball away, and the Buffaloes took over at the Redskins 18 yard line.

But the Redskin defense was able to deny a touchdown and held Garden City to a field goal.

Liberal's offense responded with a 14-play, 80-yard touchdown drive that again ended with McPhail running the Wildcat offense and plunging in to the end zone from the 4 yard line to narrow the gap to 31-14.

Garden City shot right back with an 11-play scoring drive and a 38-14 lead.

Garden City began to make substitutions the rest of the way, and Liberal could not add any points in the 38-14 loss.

"The score does not indicate how hard these guys competed," Liberal assistant coach Cliff Abbott said. "We didn't have the ball go our way. We were basically starting with a new team. When you have to fill in those spots, it's hard to keep the cohesiveness. But they fought."

Abbott was pleased with Sena's effort.

"He is a coach's player," Abbott said. "He never lets up. He has a great attitude. He may get knocked down, but he gets right back up. At the beginning of the second half, he chased the runner down. He competed to the end. If you can get 11 of those, there's no stopping you."

Liberal has one chance left to get a Western Athletic Conference win to avoid a two-year conference shutout. Great Bend will be coming to Liberal Friday for homecoming.

Great Bend lost to Dodge City Friday, 31-14. The Redskins dropped a game to the Red Demons earlier this year, 41-20.

Kick-off is scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday at Redskin Field.