

By Earl Watt

When I was a young kid, about 5 or 6, my great grandma got me out of the house by giving me a salt shaker and telling me I could catch birds if I could shake the salt on their tail feathers.

Obviously, I never caught any birds, but I did learn something about trying to put salt on hawks. And my great-grandma got what she wanted — me out of the house.

One thing is for sure, having wings is a great advantage.

If Liberal has had any struggle this season, it has been the aerial assault.

So here's the good news: Hutchinson can't throw the ball.

In nine games this year, The Salt Hawks have only attempted 47 passes and completed only 22 of them.

Friday night's game will be a strength-on-strength match-up:

Liberal's front seven against a very solid running game of Hutchinson.

Two Salt Hawks average more than 100 yards per game.

And Hutchinson runs for an average of 395 yards per game.

For all those who complain about the offense that Liberal runs, guess what? Hutchinson runs almost the exact same thing, and they won three consecutive Class 6A championships with it.

What does that mean? It means Liberal's offense can win championships.

It also means Liberal's defense knows a little something about defending against it, having practiced against it every single day of football for the past three seasons.

Of all the teams Hutchinson has played this season, they will finally have to look in the mirror Friday night when they face the Redskins.

The two programs may be the most successful and familiar with this style of offense.

All the expectations on this game are on the Salt Hawks. They are expected to win the state title. They are ranked No. 1.

And they have a number of former Liberal coaches on their staff, including Bill Foust and Rich Anderson. Their Athletic Director is Liberal High graduate and former LHS Athletic Director Eric Armstrong.

Hutchinson is familiar with Liberal and the success of the football program.

That might give the Salt Hawks pause.

The Redskins were the team of the '90s in Kansas high school football, and the Hutchinson Salt Hawks have emerged as the team from whatever the heck they will refer to this decade.

Can Liberal pull off the upset? Yes, they can!

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Liberal can either look at this game as a bad break on the bracket, or they can take advantage of the opportunity they will have on Friday night.

Liberal is still playing football while half of the teams have checked in their equipment.

Much like the election today, many consider the race to be over, the decision already made.

But just like chasing those birds with that salt shaker, it didn't take me long to figure out that I was given what many considered an impossible task. So I was determined to find a way to get some salt on that bird's tale.

And I didn't quit until I found a way.

It doesn't keep them from flying, but you can salt a bird's tale feathers if you believe you can and you try hard enough.

It's not the challenge that will define these Redskins, it's how they step up to it that will tell us about these young men, and it might even tell them something about themselves.

Friday is a great opportunity to catapult the Angry Red program right back among the elite of high school football, and that shouldn't be something that is easy. Nothing worth winning ever is.

Fellas, you've got the salt, what are you going to do with it?

We'll see you in Hutchinson.