

## **Game Recap**

### **Red Raiders Stopped Short In Season Opener - Fall to Burns, 28-27**

The opportunity to line up and pound an opponent on the football field finally returned to Lineberger Stadium Thursday night. South Point hosted the Burns Bulldogs to kick off an unusual season, shortened and delayed from a typically grinding season of gridiron battles. Usually marked by grueling summer practices and eager anticipation for a playoff push that begins in the early fall, this season would also be altered by current restrictions designed for safety, limiting fans and participation. Considering these factors, surely it would be acceptable to lower the expectations that the effort on the field be less than what has been the norm for a championship football program, right? The answer may be summed up in three words - RED RAIDER FOOTBALL! South Point, as is the custom, put a team on the field that displayed the level of heart and determination so long characterised by the champions of the past. The outstanding effort of the Big Red, unfortunately, was not rewarded with an opening victory, but for the want of two points. South Point and Burns battled back and forth in the contest with the Raiders putting themselves in position to win inside the final minute. But in the end, the Bulldogs would come away with the better record one game into the season.

Winning the toss and deferring the option to the second half, South Point sent the defense onto the field for the game's initial possession. The Bulldogs put together a combination of plays that successfully drove them inside the Raiders five yardline. Undaunted by the early success of their opponent, the Red 'D' built a wall! A forced fumble was recovered by South Point at the three and the Bulldog drive halted. The Raiders offense, led by QB Will Rhinehart and anchored by RBs Hunter Hogue and Trevon Jones came on to take advantage of the early momentum swing. Driving from the shadow of their endzone, the Raiders managed to flip the field position, but would have to punt. With their second possession, Burns worked more of the first quarter clock before reaching the endzone from 4 yards out for six points with 2:54 remaining. South Point's offense line took over on the next drive and the Raiders pounded their way into Bulldog territory before the horn sounded to end the quarter.

The Raiders began the second stanza with a push from the Bulldogs nineteen yardline. Driving to the 2, Rhinehart handed to Hogue who powered through for the equalizer. Kicker Carson Smith's PAT was drilled and South Point took their first lead of the season. Both offenses were able to gain positive yards, yet neither defense appeared to be playing poorly. The battle had just shaped up to be a fight for momentum. Burns answered the South Point score with a 9 yard touchdown and a 12-7 lead. But Rhinehart and the Raiders immediately regained control on his 10 yard scamper to make the score 14-12 South Point with 2:55 to go before the half. That was just enough time for an elusive Burns QB with a good receiving core to move back down field. A six yard pass completion with under a minute to go gave the Bulldogs the 18- 14 halftime lead.

With the ball and tons of determination, the Raiders struck and struck quickly in the third quarter. Trevon Jones took a pitch from Rhinehart around the right side and was a blur to the defenders watching him speed past! Seventy yards was the tally that regained the South Point advantage at 21-18. And when the Red 'D' forced a Burns punt with only 3:01 gone in the quarter, the Raiders seemed poised to take further control. The ensuing Raiders drive, although ending with a turnover on downs at the Bulldog seven yardline, erased 7:44 from the clock. The next Burns drive began deep in their territory and extended into the final 12 minutes.

Winning the fourth quarter would be the difference in this game and both teams were well positioned for victory in the final stanza. After trading punts, the Bulldogs managed a drive that would end with a game tying 22 yard field goal. With 6:01 left, South Point took possession and set out for the drive that seemed destined to end the contest on a positive note. Near disaster struck. A fumble recovered by Burns at the Raiders' 17 yardline was the swing needed by the Bulldogs. They would score from 3 yards out to take a 28-21 lead with 3:33 left in the contest. South Point managed a drive to the Burns three as time wound down. Inside one minute to go, Hogue plowed through for paydirt to draw the Raiders within one of the tie or two for the likely win. South Point opted to go for the win. But Burns was equal to the task to hold the score at 28-27 in their favor. And when the Bulldogs covered the ensuing onside kick the win became theirs to carry back to Lawndale.

In an unusual season it would seem permissible to accept something less than what is expected from a team on the football field. And considering the factors that make this season so much different from those in the past, it seems fitting that we consider a thought from an unlikely source to sum up the outcome of the season opener. "I'd rather regret the risks that didn't work out than the chances I didn't take at all", says Olympic gold medal winning gymnast, Simone Biles. Expecting to win means accepting the risks. In that, there are NO regrets. And next up is East Gaston - Black Friday - Pay Day!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

### **Notable Facts and Thoughts**

Hats off to South Point public address announcer, Rob Buchanan. In a remarkable show of patriotism, and due to technical difficulties that halted the playing of the National Anthem prior to the game, Mr. Buchanan, from his press box position, led the singing of the Star Spangled Banner. Due respect was given to our national ensign, proudly displayed by the South Point Navy JROTC on the field. Such moments, often unrecognized, express the foundation of civic and national pride held by communities like Belmont. Thank you, Mr. Buchanan, for your patriotic demonstration.