

Game Recap

Raiders Turn Back Wave, Whip Ashbrook, 49-14

A popular thought in sports is that setbacks make comebacks possible. The idea stops short of details, leaving a team to decide for themselves what could be done to reclaim success. With South Point, it started with belief. The three-game skid that damaged the Red Raiders' playoff hopes did much of the same to the team's confidence. Lesser programs could wonder if they would ever experience victory again. But that doesn't describe the Raiders football tradition. They believed they could turn the season around. They believed in the process that has proven successful. Most importantly, the Big Red believed in each other. And that combined with a little extra effort during a short week of practice proved the difference in a thorough dismantling of Ashbrook. South Point took control in the final five minutes of the second quarter to go ahead by two scores and never looked back. The Raiders pounded their way to the win against the conference foe and put themselves back on track for postseason play. There's still work to be done. Two conference games remain in the regular season. But to a man these Raiders understand that a focus on one game at a time, one play at a time will be necessary to achieve the expected result.

South Point won the coin toss and gave the Greenwave offense the first chance for points. It turned out that the Raiders gave Ashbrook the game's first three plays for a net -1 yard! And following the Greenwave punt, the Red 'O' set out on a 52-yard drive for the early advantage. A 1-yard run by FB Chayne Ford put the Raiders on the board and with 6:03 remaining in the opening quarter, South Point had the 7-0 lead. The teams then traded possessions until Ashbrook carried over a drive into the second stanza.

The Greenwave was forced to punt with their initial possession of the second quarter, and it appeared the Raiders had put things back on track to move further ahead. But then came an uncomfortable turn. A South Point fumble in Greenwave territory shifted momentum. Ashbrook took advantage by driving 77 yards to knot the score at 7-7 with 5:09 to go before the half. The game had suddenly taken on the appearance of the same type of "trap" game that started the Raiders' skid at Hunter Huss. But South Point dug in. And they dug in quickly! QB Patrick Blee capped a 62-yard drive with a 13-yard run to move South Point in front 13-7 with 1:36 remaining. Commenting on the importance of the game, Blee later stated, "To get a good seed in the playoffs, we've got to string some together right now, and this was a good game to get us on track." He added that the team should just play their game without any added pressure. The Red 'D' forced a three-and-out and used their timeouts to preserve time. Under a minute remained, but it was more than enough as RS Kam Crawford returned an Ashbrook punt 37 yards for the touchdown. With the 2-point conversion, the Raiders advanced their lead to 21-7 heading into the intermission.

With the ball to begin the third quarter, the Raiders were determined to maintain the momentum and send the message that this team doesn't coast. An opening drive of 72 yards ended with a 27-yard Blee run for a 28-7 lead. A pattern was then established for the stanza as the next three possessions for each team consisted of Ashbrook punts sandwiched between South Point

touchdowns. K Charlie Birtwistle was key to the Raiders defensive effort. The kicker consistently tallied touchbacks that forced the Greenwave to travel the length of the field to try to stay close. "I want my (defense) to rely on me to put the ball in the endzone every time", said the Senior kicker. On the ensuing drives, Ford added to the total on a 3-yard run. Blee then boosted the lead on a 29-yard scamper. And finally, taking over under center, QB Ashton Green ran 35 yards on a first downplay to end the scoring in the quarter. When the dust settled, from the Big Red ground attack, South Point had taken a 49-7 advantage into the fourth quarter.

The lopsided score set the clock in motion for the remainder of the contest. Ashbrook managed a score to get them to double digits, but the night belonged to South Point. The Raiders returned to the win column with a convincing 49-14 victory. DL Zolan McCullough summed up the Big Red effort, "We had business to take care of", he said, adding that the short week of practice was treated with intense focus. "One game at a time", stated McCullough, pointing to the determination going forward for the Raiders.

The Raiders never doubted their ability to play competitive football. And the setback that came with the three-game skid only served to make them take stock of the character they possess. The Big Red believed they would turn things around, they believed in the process that built the tradition, and they believed in one another, that each would carry his load and that of a teammate in need. The win against Ashbrook may count as but a single game in the conference standings. But to this year's Red Raiders, it will be the starting point for something much greater.

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

The Red Raiders will look to sustain their winning momentum as they travel to Forestview next Friday. The Jaguars have struggled this season but could gain a measure of respect in a spoiler role. No letdowns, Red!