

Game Recap

Character Defined! – Red Raiders Turn Back CHASE, 36-34

A little more than two months ago, the prospect of a 2020 high school football season still seemed remote. So much about daily life had changed in response to the pandemic. Priorities had to be reset and “new” norms established. Given its early start in the school calendar, football stood to bear a brunt of the changes, and cancellation altogether was not out of the realm of possibility. Even as plans were made to shorten schedules and put teams on the field, no one could be certain of the caliber of play that could be expected. South Point, with a tradition unmatched, expected to compete on the field and nothing less than paramount effort would be accepted in each contest. The challenges to start were met head on, and the Raiders were eager to overcome others on the field. But in this unpredictable season it was the teaching moments, both on and off the field, which brought out the true character of South Point football. Ironically, the CHASE game seemed to perfectly summarize the Red Raiders season. Fighting from behind, overcoming mistakes, and giving one more ounce of effort when none seemed left in reserve, describe the barn burner victory over the Trojans!

South Point won the toss and deferred the option, giving the Trojans first crack on offense. But the CHASE ‘O’ would not take the field. A fumbled kick return was recovered by the Raiders at the opponents 23 yardline. South Point though, was unable to gain control of the line of scrimmage and would be forced to settle for a field goal attempt. The Trojans rush was quicker than expected and the kick failed. In spite of the missed opportunity there remained plenty of time for the Raiders to get in gear. CHASE took over at their 20 and, using a potent passing attack, moved downfield to put seven on the board. The quarter was less than four minutes in and the first major momentum swing had occurred. The Trojans fortune continued as would South Point’s troubles. A fumbled exchange on the Raiders ensuing possession gave CHASE the ball at their 40 yardline. The Red ‘D’ stood up to the challenge and forced a punt to help stem the tide. But South Point continued to struggle as yet another fumble would be recovered by the Trojans near midfield. Moving into South Point territory, the CHASE drive ended with a 26-yard touchdown pass to put the visitor’s up 14-0. The Raiders carried the next possession into the second stanza. But for the record, South Point exited the first quarter down by two scores after missing a field goal and fumbling twice on three possessions. Momentum needed to turn for the Red Raiders.

A solid, ground-pounding attack drove South Point deep into Trojans territory to start the second quarter. RB Tyson Riley punched in from two yards out for six and K Carson Smith notched the PAT to bring the Raiders to within seven, 14-7. Intent on maintaining the momentum, the Red ‘D’ stiffened again to force a CHASE punt. The ball took a South Point bounce giving the Raiders good field position at their 42 yardline. Just over seven minutes remained before the half and the Red ‘O’ was equal to the challenge. A drive of 3:08 moved South Point to the Trojans three where Riley would again dive in for six. The CHASE lead was trimmed at 14-13

and the Raiders seemed to be in control. But the Trojans regained their composure and set about to keep the Red 'O' off the field. A drive that took the clock to within a minute before the half (00:48) ended with a "Hail Mary" pass on fourth down, netting six more for CHASE. Their lead had grown to 20-13 and it would seem that the Raiders would need to regroup at the intermission to make a run in the second half. But as special as was the scoring play that increased the CHASE lead, lightning was about to strike for South Point! A dead ball penalty on CHASE gave South Point the ball at the Trojans 44 yardline. Riley took a pitch and picked up two. Then SE Ethan Simmons hauled in a pass from QB Will Rhinehart and covered 42 yards for the score! In twenty-four seconds the Raiders had knotted the score 20-20. They were not done! From the shotgun on the ensuing possession, the CHASE QB rolled out with intent to heave a pass downfield looking for points. The decision was ill-conceived. From his defensive line position, DL Aiden Ramirez took a line through the backfield that bested the speed of the rolling quarterback. Ramirez dove to make the sack and in the process jarred the ball loose. His D-line teammate, Shane Wilson scooped up the ball, advanced a couple of yards to the CHASE eight and saved enough time on the clock for a South Point field goal attempt. Smith booted the 25 yarder to give the Raiders the halftime advantage at 23-20. Once again, for the record, South Point put ten points on the board in 48 seconds to take a halftime lead!

The ups and downs of the first half mirrored the season for South Point. The Red Raiders firmly established themselves as a resilient group that battles back from adversity, and gives every ounce of effort until the final whistle sounds. With the ball to begin the third quarter, South Point set out to continue to put the pressure of CHASE. A solid, 66-yard, drive of just over five minutes established the mark. Rhinehart cut in from 12 yards out and the Big Red lead stood at 30-20. The Trojans, taking a page from the Red Raiders "Book of Effort", managed a drive for points that closed the gap back to three, 30-27. The two time-consuming drives essentially closed out the quarter and the stage was set for a finale that will long be remembered in Red Raiders football history.

From their 49 yardline, the Raiders hammered out yardage on the ground using the tackle-breaking ability of Riley and Omari Hunt. The two alternated carries to move the ball to the CHASE one. The Red O-line had taken control on four consecutive drives stemming from the start of the second quarter. And they would make it five-in-a-row when Riley dove in from 1-yard out. South Point held to a 36-27 lead with 6:10 remaining in regulation. Once again the Trojans did not go quietly and their desperation plays found success. A thirty-eight yard touchdown pass cut the advantage to 36-34 with 2:36 to go. South Point's "hands team" lined up for the ensuing onside kick. The kick took a high bounce but was covered by the Raiders. All that remained would be to kill the clock with first downs or put more points on the board. Both appeared possible after a 42 yard dash by Hunt on a second down play that put the Raiders at the CHASE fifteen. South Point continued to the two with a Riley run on the next snap. But then with 1:30 on the clock the unthinkable happened. A muffed exchange was pounced upon by the Trojans and they had life at their 2 yardline. With no timeouts, desperation passes were their

only hope. CHASE quickly moved out to their thirty-nine but the Raiders pursuit forced a fourth down and eight. A heave to the sidelines was caught and the drive sustained across midfield. A couple of quarterback scrambles took them to the South Point thirty-three before a penalty set them back five yards to the thirty-eight. On what would become the game's last play the Trojans quarterback rolled to his left and heaved a pass toward the endzone. The pass was in the hands of the taller receiver, but DB Macario Brandon did not give up on the play. The ball was tipped and fell incomplete. The Big Red victory was preserved by a valiant effort!

In an unpredictable season that will be remembered for reasons never imagined, South Point squared off with CHASE in a contest that would keep both teams' slim playoff hopes alive. With pandemic rules in place and an abbreviated schedule, this year exposed teams to pressures uncommon in a typical football season. Strangely, perhaps more than any other time in program history, this season produced more teachable moments and provided more opportunities for leadership. The ebb and flow of the contest with CHASE perfectly summarized the season of ups and downs for South Point. Mistakes were made, mistakes were overcome. Leadership was needed, leaders stepped up. Effort was demanded, and effort was delivered! The 36-34 tally on the scoreboard proved the Raiders as winners. But their attitude and determination proved that from day one!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

"Fear the Farm" was a slogan seen at the stadium Friday night in the contest against CHASE. Given the rural setting of the school, the slogan seems quite appropriate. It should naturally follow that the game would turn out to be a "Barn Burner" of sorts!