

Game Recap

“Red Raiders Stumble In Second Half...Fall to Blue Eagles, 30-21”

Typically, there are 125 plays in a high school football game. In other words, the game is set in motion, the ball is live, and players physically engage, on average, 125 times from opening whistle to closing horn. To suggest that one play would mark the difference between winning and losing is a stretch at best. Rather, one play can be thought of as the difference between claiming the momentum that carries a team to victory... or keeps them from it. That momentum-swinging play eluded the Red Raiders in the second half last Friday night, causing the visit across the border to end on a sour note. South Point put 21 points on the board in the first two quarters, taking a 21-14 lead into the half. But the Raiders were unable to add to their advantage in the final two stanzas. Clover, meanwhile, effectively spread the field and mounted a comeback, battling to the 30-21 win.

The Blue Eagles took the opening kick and immediately went to work spreading the Red defense. Clover receivers were adept at finding the open area on the field. And this countered the strong effort by South Point's pass rush up front. The Eagles connected on consecutive passes to march quickly downfield and deliver the initial punch on a 9-yard pass for the early 7-0 lead. The Raiders fought back with a power drive from their twenty-six yardline. South Point used a ground-pounding attack to chew up yardage and clock. A key play in the drive was a 4th and 1 conversion on the Raiders side of midfield at their forty-seven. FB Naseem Jones bulled his way for two yards to the South Point 49, collecting the new set of downs and keeping the drive alive. The decision to go for it on fourth down proved a high degree of confidence in the ability of the Red 'O' to move the line of scrimmage. The “beef” up front did not disappoint! South Point continued their march to the Clover twenty-three yardline. From there, QB Keaton Hale called his own number, cut up the middle into the Blue Eagles secondary, and raced untouched into the endzone. With 3:39 remaining in the quarter (after only 2 possessions), the Red Raiders knotted the contest at 7. The Blue Eagles' ensuing drive carried over into the second quarter.

Continuing to work the field in the same successful manner from their initial possession, Clover managed to retake the lead on a 7-yard touchdown pass to make the score 14-7. South Point answered. Moving from their 39-yardline, the Raiders drove to the Blues Eagles' twenty-five. Hale once again kept the ball, gave a shoulder fake, and outran the defense to South Point's second score. With the game tied at 14, K Cade Ratliff sailed his kick into and through the endzone for the touchback. From the Clover twenty, the Red 'D' dug in. The teams battled, and both were victimized by penalties. The Raiders were flagged for a roughing the kicker penalty on a punt (that may have been tipped off the punters toe). The drive continued for the Blue Eagles with a new set of downs. But Clover was also hit with untimely holding penalties brought on by the relentless pursuit of the South Point defense. Eventually the five-minute drive was stopped, and the game's first “official” punt came at 2:58 before halftime. The Raiders took the field and set out to turn momentum. Their effort paid off! Moving from the twenty-seven to their forty-seven yardline in four plays, South Point then decided to go for the big play. Hale launched a spiraled bomb in the direction of SE Ray Grier downfield. Grier grabbed the pass

and cruised to the endzone. The Raiders had their first lead of the game at 21-14. More importantly, South Point had momentum and would receive the second half kick.

Unfortunately for South Point, out of the gate in the third quarter, things went “south” so to speak. The Blue Eagles recovered a muffed pooch kick at the Raiders 41 yardline. In one play, a scrambling quarterback reversed his field and, while running for his life, found an open receiver. The ball handler then weaved from side to side using the entire field before finally finding the endzone to complete the touchdown pass play. Clover drew even at 21, quickly securing the momentum they would enjoy throughout the remaining 23:22 of regulation. South Point could draw no closer after the Blue Eagles added another third quarter touchdown and a fourth quarter field goal. Clover claimed the 30-21 victory built on the foundation of grabbing momentum and keeping the Raiders from making that one play that could have turned the tide.

With the number of plays run throughout a high school football game, NO “one” should be marked as THE “one” that wins or losses a contest. Rather it is several “ones” that shift momentum and gives teams advantage and opportunity to control their destiny. Uncharacteristically, South Point was unable to turn the tide during the second half of last Friday night’s battle with the Clover Blue Eagles. Equally uncharacteristic was the choice by players to act on their frustrations in a negative way. The loss on the field was disappointing. The Red Raiders’ effort was not. Fortunately, the mistakes are correctable and the focus to win, and win the South Point way, is still intact. The Red Raiders will get the chance to redeem themselves and strengthen as a team next Friday against the rival Stuart Cramer Storm. Reduce ‘em to a drizzle!

Go Get ‘Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

Sometimes the will to win is so overwhelmingly strong that it becomes easy to lose focus on the important concepts of what it takes to be a TEAM in sports. If success is strictly measured according to the number of victories, a “group” of players is not likely to reflect an established and respected program. But if success is measured according to a program’s sportsmanship and high moral character, the wins that follow are much more satisfying. It begins with recognizing that the program is established and as such is much bigger than a single coach, player, trainer, manager, or fan.

Jamey Andrews