

Game Recap

“The Stand”, Raiders Eliminate Chargers, 21-20

In 1972, the Pittsburgh Steelers trailed the Oakland Raiders with 30 seconds remaining in a divisional playoff game. The “Immaculate Reception” changed the course of the Steelers’ fate that day. In 1982, the Stanford Cardinal had left a mere 00:04 on the clock after taking a 20-19 lead over the California Golden Bears. “The Play” reversed fortunes and the Cardinal faithful, including an unfortunate trombone player, were crushed. In 1992, the kickers took the stage. Trailing 19-16 to the #2 Miami Hurricanes, the Florida State Seminoles pinned their hopes on the foot of a kicker to tie the ballgame and keep their own championship hopes alive. The scenario had already played out the season prior. But in both instances, “Wide Right” became the words that invoked nightmares for FSU fans. In 2002, and with these same two teams embroiled in battle, the #1 Hurricanes fought back from two scores down to take a 28-27 lead. But with one second on the clock and Florida State lined up for the game-winning field goal, “Wide Left” took its place in football history. In 2012, the Green Bay Packers were visiting the Seattle Seahawks and led 12-7 with 8 seconds to go. Seattle faced a fourth and ten, setting the stage for a final play. To those clad in green and gold it was the “Fail Mary” (a.k.a., the “Inaccurate Reception”) that cut down the Packers that night. Covering 50 years of football, these plays were so remarkable that they were given titles, thus ensuring a place in history for those contests. So, 2022?

“The Stand”

Hosting rival Crest, South Point put up an impenetrable wall that kept the Chargers a single yard away from advancing in the playoffs! “The Stand” secured the Raiders’ 21-20 victory and kept their NCHSAA 3A State Playoff drive alive.

Crest won the toss and deferred the option, choosing to give South Point the ball to start the game. The Raiders put together a drive from their 29-yardline to near midfield before a questionable chop block penalty halted the momentum. South Point was forced to punt and the Chargers took advantage of the shift. Crest spread the field with four wideouts and was able to move the ball downfield on the arm and legs of an athletic quarterback. The Chargers connected on a 1-yard touchdown pass to take the early 7-0 lead. The Red ‘O’ tried to answer, but were again victimized by calls, and “no calls.” A seemingly obvious pass interference call did not draw a flag on a third down play and South Point was forced to punt again. Just over five minutes remained in the quarter and the Chargers went back to work. Moving from near midfield, Crest made good on a 12-yard pass to push them out to a 14-0 advantage. The Raiders needed a change in the flow of the contest and it did not appear to be forthcoming when the

ensuing squib kick had to be covered at the South Point 12-yardline. But a first down burst by FB Cam Medlock gained field position for the Raiders, out to the South Point 42-yardline. The O-line continued to win the battle at the line of scrimmage and the drive carried over into the second quarter.

With 1st and 10 from the Crest 24-yardline, the Raiders continued their drive to the Chargers three. From there, Medlock cruised in to put South Point on the board. K Charlie Birtwistle notched the all-important extra point to cut the lead to seven (14-7). Penalties, and the Raiders defensive pursuit, halted the next Crest possession and the Chargers punted with 7:50 remaining before the half. South Point drove from their 48-yardline deep into Crest territory. From four yards out, QB Patrick Blee dove inside the pylon to pull the Raiders even at 14. With just over a minute to go, the Chargers did not mount a drive and the teams headed to the intermission tied.

With the opening possession of the third stanza, Crest capitalized on a drive that ended with a 46-yard touchdown pass for six. The PAT was pushed right and signaled no good keeping the game at a 20-14 Chargers lead. South Point answered on their next possession. Driving from their 35-yardline, the Red 'O' continued to pound out the yardage. Moving to the Crest 3-yardline, Medlock punched in to draw South Point even. Birtwistle then untied the score with a perfect PAT. The teams traded blows before heading into the final 12:00 with the Raiders holding the 21-20 advantage.

In the fourth quarter it seemed to come to mind that the end of a season was coming for one of the powerhouse programs. Desperation set in and miscues mounted. The final minutes of the contest were marred by fumbles, punts and turnovers on downs. But somehow the erratic play seemed somewhat appropriate for the end of the story. With 6:47 remaining, the Chargers began the most important drive of the season - for both teams. In four plays from their 12-yardline, Crest moved to the Raiders forty-two. Eight plays later they were at the South Point 4-yardline with a 1st and goal. Barring penalties, the Chargers had 4 downs to try to end the Raiders' season. Just under 2:00 remained in regulation and the Red 'D' had been on the field for what must have seemed an eternity. Grit is what kept the Big Red battling! On the 1st down play, the Crest QB was forced out of bounds at the 1-yardline. The clock stopped. A run up the middle was stonewalled by the Red D-line on 2nd down. On 3rd down, a stumbling running back was ridden down to force a 4th down decision. Timeouts by both squads ensued. As the teams returned to the field, OL Sullivan Absher was summoned for assistance on the defensive line. Unable to break through the Red wall, and apparently lacking confidence in a kicking game, Crest elected to pass their way into the next round. The shotgun snap was delivered. The Raiders pushed the line with every ounce of strength remaining. Absher and DL Aiden Ramirez converged on the QB. The arm came forward and the ball released. At that moment, Absher extended his frame,

reached with his left arm and batted the ball away! The Red 'D' made the stand and took over on downs! South Point maintained possession for the final 1:08 and was aided in field position by consecutive unsportsmanlike conduct calls against the Chargers. Later, describing the play that would essentially end the Chargers' season, Absher admitted that the call took him by surprise. But, he said, "You got to be ready when called on and just go do what you know how to do." "I knew I wasn't going to catch the quarterback, so I just wanted to get my hand up," he added. The offensive lineman's willingness to step out of his element to support his defensive teammates is a testament to how much this team cares for one another. "The Stand" vaulted the Raiders into the 4th round of the playoffs.

The "Immaculate Reception", "The Play", "Wide Right", "Wide Left", and "Fail Mary", each describe a memorable play in college and professional football. Plays so remarkable they earn titles to mark their significance. And now, "The Stand" will forevermore be remembered as that moment in South Point Football history when the championship hopes of Crest were denied! With so much on the line and so little left in the tank, the Big Red found a way to fight through to the end. The grit earned them the opportunity to advance. Practice: Thanksgiving Day. Keep fightin', Red!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

South Point hosts Eastern Guilford in the 4th round of the playoffs. The Wildcats took out the #2 seed, and previously unbeaten, West Henderson Falcons. The Raiders and Eastern Guilford share a single common opponent, the Dudley Panthers. Don't look back. Look forward.