
VARSITY REPORT

by Jamey Andrews

“Black Friday Beat Down...Raiders Rock Rival, 56-0”

Walter Payton, the late great running back of the NFL's Chicago Bears, once said, “When you're GOOD at something, you'll tell everyone. When you're GREAT at something, they'll tell you.” Greatness took the field Friday night at Lineberger Stadium, even before the first snap was taken. Former Head Coach Jim Biggerstaff was recognized by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association on the occasion of his induction into the NCHSAA Hall of Fame. Coach Biggerstaff was joined by former players and coaches, some from South Point's inaugural 1969 team. Others were members of Red Raiders championship teams through Coach's final 1989 season. Coach “Bigg” is often credited with having established the South Point football tradition, an accolade he deflects. But there can be no denying the outpouring of love and respect signaled by the return of former players/coaches and the response of a grateful RaiderNation. South Point coaches that have followed Coach Biggerstaff have carried forward the message of a strong work ethic and unselfish play. The Red Raiders have a proud tradition because it became important from the outset to build a **program**, rather than following the lead of others venturing to build **teams** from season to season. South Point has built a program, for all-time! Following the well-deserved recognition, focus turned to the business at hand, a glimpse of what a journey to greatness looks like on the field. And this was...Black Friday! Rival East Gaston was welcomed to the nightmare by a hard-hitting Red Raiders squad that would score in every quarter and build a defensive wall en route to a 56-0 rocking of the Warriors.

For the fifth time in seven contests, South Point won the toss and deferred the option, giving the opponent the first chance on offense. And, as has often been the case, the Red defense put the ball in the hands of their offensive teammates just three plays into the game! South Point began a drive at the 9:37 mark of the first quarter and ended the drive in two plays! From the Red Raiders 42 yardline, quarterback Scottie Lee broke through the left side and scampered 58 yards for the opening score. Right Tackle Riley Nichols delivered a hole-opening block that Lee cut through for the touchdown run. Kicker Cade Ratliff added the point after and barely three minutes in, the Raiders had the 7-0 lead. The ensuing kickoff was drilled into the endzone forcing the Warriors to begin at their 20 yardline. East Gaston worked to spread the Red ‘D’ and found some success, moving the ball across midfield. The drive approached five minutes but was wrought with Warriors penalties and South Point pursuit. Finally, on third down and “forever”, linebacker Nate Hamilton chased the scrambling Warrior quarterback to the East Gaston 30 yardline and ended the play with a sack. It would be one of several sacks and tackles for loss that the Raiders defense would collect against the Warriors. But Hamilton and his defensive teammates weren't satisfied with the effort. Focusing only on the positive yardage gained by East Gaston, Hamilton admitted, “They had (more) rushing yards than they should have. We're going to improve; we're going to be better.” Hamilton and his teammates have set a standard for themselves that approaches greatness and they are determined to work hard to achieve their goals. After the second East Gaston punt, the Red Raiders embarked on a seven

play, 80 yard drive that ended with a 22 yard strike from Lee to split end Ray Grier. Grier's speed put him five yards behind the defenders and Lee's pass fell into his arms in stride. South Point moved to 14-0 with 1:57 remaining in the first quarter.

On a drive that extended from the first, East Gaston ran five plays and was forced to punt early in the second stanza. Facing a 4th and 4, the Warriors attempted a rugby style kick, hoping to catch the Raiders off guard and pick up new set of downs with a fake. The Raiders didn't flinch! Instead, defensive lineman Nolan Cochran, drifting back to prepare to block for the returner, alertly scooped up the low end-over-end kick near midfield and returned the ball to the East Gaston thirty-eight. A 2 yard loss on first down moved the ball back to the forty yardline. From there Lee once again hit Grier in stride down the middle for a 40 yard strike to put South Point up 21-0 with 10:18 to go before halftime. The Raiders were not done on either side of the ball! Two possessions later, Cochran made his mark on the contest for South Point once again. Coming off a block, Cochran spun toward the inside and grabbed an interception that ricocheted off linebacker Sean Burns. Burns was covering the middle of the field when the ball was delivered and deflected back toward Cochran. The interception put the Raiders at their 48 yardline and eager to take advantage of the turnover. As had been the success in the first half, Lee again connected with Grier on a 41 yard pass that moved the Red 'O' deep into Warriors territory. Two plays later fullback Jake Alexander got into the scoring column with a nine yard run. The Raiders built a 28-0 advantage with 2:27 to go in the second. The ensuing drive for East Gaston began at their seven. A quick three-and-out would allow South Point to manage the clock with timeouts and perhaps put more points on the board. It did...and they did! The Warriors punt at the 1:52 mark was fielded by Grier at the East Gaston forty-six. The speedy returner benefitted from crushing blocks (one, in fact, by Cochran) to cover the yardage to the endzone. South Point carried the 35-0 lead into the lockerroom.

With the ball to begin the third, the Red Raiders wasted no time looking for the nails to seal the coffin! From their 42 yardline, Lee found split end Charles Cason for a completion to the Warriors thirty-three. The drive continued to the East Gaston one where Alexander carried across for the touchdown. Kicker David O'Hanlon, like his teammate Ratliff, was perfect on the PAT and the 42-0 score resulted in a live clock beginning at the 9:03 mark of the third quarter. The kickers figured prominently, albeit perhaps quietly, in the Red Raiders success throughout the game. Seven of nine kickoffs by South Point resulted in touchbacks. The other two kicks gave the Warriors possession at the seven and twelve yardlines. Winning the battle of field position cannot be understated as kicking games can often help determine outcomes late in the season. Asked about the value of the kicking game and the effort expected, Ratliff said, "We're just trying to do our best, just trying to do what the coach asks." Obviously the expectation to continuously improve and perform is not exclusive to the offense and defense. Special teams are equally important to championship teams. Along with the live clock, the deficit also allowed the Raiders to insert backups into the fray. Quarterback Keaton Hale took over under center as the end of the third approached. Hale called his own number, rushing twice from the South Point 40 to midfield for ten yards, and then 50 yards for the touchdown. The Red Raiders domination reached 49-0 with a quarter to go in regulation.

South Point's final scoring drive came in the fourth quarter when running back Ty Tinker ran in from the eleven for the 56-0 final. The field position was set up by returner Tre Glenn taking a Warriors punt 40 yards from the South Point forty-one to the East Gaston nineteen yardline. The Raiders 'D' slammed the door on the Warriors final possession and South Point's third quarterback of the game, Jarvis Davis took a knee to seal the victory.

The mark of greatness was on display prior to the start of South Point's contest with East Gaston. Former Head Coach Jim Biggerstaff was recognized for his well-deserved induction into the NCHSAA Hall of Fame. Following the ceremony, the focus shifted to a display of what Coach "Bigg" and his successors (Tate, Devine, Lineberger, Hodge) have established and sustained throughout the South Point football tradition. The Red Raiders took another step toward their highest goal with a 56-0 rocking of rival East Gaston. Former NFL great, Walter Payton understood the difference between good and great. South Point's work ethic and attitude does all the talking...on the field!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

The new season began with the first conference victory. Staying on top will be the challenge. No time to rest on history. Time to MAKE history!

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