

Game Recap

Inevitable! – Red Raiders Whip East Gaston, 35-7

“Inevitable” by definition describes something that is unavoidable, certain to happen, inescapable. There are many things in life that may be considered inevitable. Typically, death and taxes immediately come to mind. Other situations including change, aging, and mistakes are often categorized as inevitable. More often than not, these descriptions prove true, and others may be added to the list. For example, after last Friday night’s visit to Arrowhead Stadium and the annual matchup with East Gaston, it could be that ‘South Point pounding the Warriors on the gridiron’ should be adopted as another appropriate description of something that is inevitable! The Red Raiders turned a 7–7 halftime knot into an all familiar 35-7 whipping of the Black Friday rival. It would mark South Point’s 15th consecutive victory in the rivalry and see the Raiders push their early season record to 2-0, having outscored their opponents by an 81-14 margin. To put the win over East Gaston in perspective, consider that with a streak that dates 15 years, there are Red Raiders on this year’s squad that had not been born the last time South Point fell in the series. Inevitable? Inevitable!

South Point won the toss and deferred their option to receive the second half kickoff. East Gaston accepted the ball to begin the contest and the first half battle was on. With the opening possession, the Warriors managed to move from their thirty-one to near midfield picking up a single first down. Early success on the ground seemed promising for East Gaston. But facing a 2nd and 7 from the Warriors 48 yardline, DL Josh Crowder put an end to the that promise. Crowder bulled through the line and slammed the East Gaston QB for an eight yard loss and forced a 3rd and long. The effort motivated his teammates. On the third down play, a powerful rush initiated from the outside by DB Ben Lunsford forced the QB up into the pocket. DL Xarique Culbreath took care of the rest. Culbreath ended the opening series with the game’s second sack at the Warriors’ thirty-two. For the record, the opening drive netted one yard for the home team and early momentum was seized by the Raiders. Taking possession on their thirty-three yardline, the South Point ‘O’ went to work. QB Cam Medlock engineered the attack and the ground game had some success with RB Tyson Riley pounding through behind a powerful O-line. The Raiders gained the East Gaston forty-six but the drive stalled on a soft field that left South Point facing a 4th and 3. Reading the receiving team’s alignment in punt formation gave the Raiders an opportunity. The snap to up man Ryan Harris was turned into a 15 yard gain and a new set of downs for South Point. The Raiders gained positive yardage on the next two plays but became their own enemy on third down. A muffed pitch was recovered by East Gaston, giving them their second possession, again from the thirty-one. Two snap miscues helped stall the Warriors drive and they would punt before making midfield. South Point took over at their nine following a non-returnable punt and roll. The ground attacks by both teams hastened the first quarter clock and the two would take a 0-0 affair into the second stanza.

After twelve minutes of play, East Gaston gained a measure of confidence from having not yet been blown out by South Point and so the Warriors flexed some muscle early in the second. Forcing a punt from deep in Raiders' territory, East Gaston took possession at the South Point forty-seven for their third drive. The Red 'D' fought hard, bending but not breaking. DL Aiden Ramirez halted the Warriors drive with a tackle for loss near the South Point thirteen. A five yard penalty on the Raiders moved the ball closer but did not garner a first down so East Gaston was forced to settle for a 24 yard field goal attempt for the contest's first points. A high snap and a solid rush saw the kick go wide right and South Point took over at their twenty yardline for their third possession. In three plays the inspired Raiders managed midfield. Riley took advantage of open holes in the middle and was able to spin his way for big gains for South Point. From the East Gaston six, Medlock spelled his workhorse. The QB kept the ball around the right side and crossed the goalline just inside the pylon for the South Point score. K Charles Birtwistle's PAT was true and the Red Raiders grabbed the 7-0 advantage with a little over three minutes remaining in the half. Unfortunately the lead was short-lived...very short-lived. A speedy Warrior return man took the ensuing kickoff the length of the field for the equalizer. No further threats were mounted and the teams went to the intermission tied at seven.

The Red Raiders plan to seize control of the expected rout after a motivational halftime speech was quickly thwarted on the third quarter kickoff. A fumble on the return was recovered by the Warriors, setting them up at the South Point thirty-four. Again the Red 'D' went into bend but don't break mode. East Gaston ran three plays that gained 4 yards and opted to go for it on fourth down. The Raiders were equal to the challenge and the ball went over on downs. Beginning at their thirty yardline, South Point mixed in some big plays to move the ball downfield. Sliding across the line of scrimmage from a wing position, RB Ashton Harris made a leaping, spinning, over-the-shoulder catch that energized the Raiders offense. South Point pounded their way to the Warriors' thirty-five. From there, WR/RB Joseph O'Neil took the pitch and outran the field to add six to the Raiders' tally. South Point pushed the advantage to 14-7 with just under eight minutes to go in the third. Lightning struck again on the ensuing kickoff, but not in a good way for East Gaston. Rather than an opportunistic return, the short kick was fielded and the ball promptly dropped on the ground where the Red Raiders would recover. With possession at the Warriors 36, South Point was again in business. The going did not get easy. Consecutive losses moved the Raiders back to their side of midfield. But South Point was able to regain the East Gaston forty-four after a couple of runs. Then on second and "half a mile", Medlock dropped straight back and launched a perfect strike to TE Jackson Blee. Blee sped behind the defense and easily coasted into the endzone for the 44 yard pass and catch for six. South Point moved in front by a 21-7 score and was looking to continue their dominance in the series. An incomplete bubble screen, a one yard run, and an overthrown bomb ended the following East Gaston drive and South Point had 5:43 on the clock to firmly establish the rout. On the legs of Riley and Medlock, the Red Raiders quickly moved into Warriors territory at the thirty-one. From there, Riley appeared to cover the remaining yardage but was marked out of bounds at the two. For his effort, the RB was rewarded with another carry. He dove in behind

OL teammates Ethan Thagard and Sullivan Absher for the touchdown. In fact, the play would have been successful from any position on the line as the entire Warriors defensive line was pushed beyond the goalline. Asked later about his running success and that of the Raiders, Riley quickly applauded the effort of the offensive line. “The O-line was amazing”, he said, adding that the entire team knew they needed to turn it up in the second half. The speedy back also emphasized that leadership is not likely to be a concern for this team of Red Raiders as the season progresses. He pointed out that on any given night there are multiple players capable of stepping up and putting the team on their back. His two yard plunge put South Point up 28-7 with a quarter remaining to achieve the inevitable!

On a drive that carried over from the third, East Gaston managed positive yards but the attack did not save valuable time on the clock. The “fight” had not left the Warriors, but neither had the determination of the Red Raiders. And when a 4th and 1 shotgun snap from the South Point 14 was muffed, the outcome became a foregone conclusion. In two plays, the Raiders covered 69 yards for the game’s final points. Riley picked up 3 and then 66 yards to paydirt. South Point had taken the 35-7 lead that would not be challenged. And after the teams traded single possessions for the remainder of the fourth quarter, the deal was done.

The Red Raiders extended their dominance in the Black Friday rivalry for a 15th consecutive series victory. For those born after 2006...well...look up the word, “Inevitable”.

Go Get ‘Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

With the cancellation of the RS-Central game next week, South Point is actively searching for an opponent to fill the open slot. The Red Raiders have a scheduled Bye the following week so the potential to go without Raiders football for two weeks is a possibility. Any changes or arrangements will be communicated.