

Game Recap

South Point Advances, Knocks Out Eastern Guilford, 41-31

In a matchup of even seeds, South Point hosted Eastern Guilford in a #16 vs. #17 tilt to kickoff the 1st round of the NCHSAA Playoffs. The Raiders took early advantage on defense and offense before the contest became a back-and-forth affair. Each team brought their strengths to the field and found success. The battle became one that would be earned, with the prize to the victor being a potential meeting with the top seed in the 3A class. It was obvious early on that the focus of both squads was squarely on the task at hand.

Eastern Guilford had proven a high-scoring ability, routinely putting more than 40 points on the board in most games. And the Wildcats would get first crack to open the scoring in this contest. Behind a “beefy” offensive line, Eastern Guilford found some success both on the ground and through the air. But the Red ‘D’ was equal to the task and would force a punt on the first Wildcats possession. With the ball at their forty yardline, the Raiders elected to give the visitors a steady dose of RB Tyson Riley. The ground attack drove South Point to the Eastern Guilford six where the sturdy back would punch through for the initial score. K Charles Birtwistle drilled the PAT and South Point had the early 7-0 lead. The advantage was short-lived however as in two plays the Wildcats had drawn even. The scoring pass of 74 yards began with a pump fake that drew the defense and left a speedy receiver open downfield. The Raiders began their second drive from the twenty-two after a short kick, but the possession stalled near midfield forcing a South Point punt. P Dylan Nicks nailed a moon-shot that was allowed to bounce and was downed by the Raiders at the Eastern Guilford one yardline. It seemed that any momentum lost had been quickly regained. And after a false start penalty moved the ball inside the one, it seemed everything had turned back to South Point. But a first down carry out to the twenty-four proved that nothing would be easy in this contest that would end one team’s season. A scrambling quarterback and a prolific passing attack moved the Wildcats downfield. The possession would end the quarter sending the game tied at 7 into the second stanza.

From the South Point twenty-three, Eastern Guilford had 1st and 10 and a solid threat to begin the quarter. After a fourth down conversion and a holding penalty, the Wildcats opted for a reverse that was turned in to a 20 yard touchdown run. Eastern Guilford took the 14-7 lead. And things would not immediately improve for the Red Raiders. On the first down play of the ensuing drive, a South Point fumble was recovered by the Wildcats at the Raiders 29 yardline. The Red ‘D’ held firm and forced a field goal attempt. The 36 yard kick was good and Eastern Guilford moved ahead 17-7. South Point benefitted from a short kick and a positive return to the forty-one. The good fortune was nearly lost on a muffed pitch, but was regained on a 4th down conversion at the Red Raiders forty-eight to sustain the drive. Then on a 3rd and 10 pitch from the Eastern Guilford thirty-one, Riley made a series of perfect reads and cuts en route to the endzone. The score cut the lead to three at 17-14 with the end of the half approaching. The Red

'D' stood firm against the Wildcats offense, negating a scoring opportunity as time expired in the first half.

With the ball to begin the third quarter of play, South Point once again started with good field position near their forty. The Eastern Guilford defense battled against the triple option. But it would be a pass interference call against the Wildcats that would most benefit the Red 'O' on the drive. From the Eastern Guilford fourteen, QB Elijah Phiffer faked a handoff and carried around the left side for the touchdown. South Point reclaimed the lead 21-17 with over eight minutes remaining in the quarter. The advantage did not last. As is custom for a quick strike offense, one play, a pass to the outside, was turned into an eighty yard score to put the Wildcats up 24-21. But the Raiders immediately mounted another charge. A 37-yard connection between Phiffer and TE Jackson Blee moved South Point across midfield. The Raiders moved on to the score for yet another lead change. The Raiders held the 28-24 advantage going into the final twelve minutes of play.

On a possession that carried over into the fourth, Eastern Guilford notched their fourth touchdown of the contest to retake the lead at 31-28 with over eleven minutes to play. A four play, sixty-three yard drive culminated in a 47-yard Riley burst through the middle to put South Point up 34-31. The Red 'D' took on the task to make the stop that would likely preserve victory. Their effort was outstanding. Fourth and four pressure from DL Aiden Ramirez and DL Josh Crowder forced an incomplete pass and South Point took over at the Wildcats forty-one. On the second play of the drive, another Riley breakout from the thirty-four garnered six more for the home team. The Big Red had taken their biggest lead at ten, 41-31, late in the contest. And when DB Will Ross recovered a fumbled caused by Crowder at the South Point twenty-three yardline on the ensuing Eastern Guilford drive, the Big Red was poised to notch another playoff victory in program history. The Red 'O' took advantage of the defensive effort by driving to the Wildcats five yardline. From that point the Raiders took a knee and the win to advance to the second round of the playoffs!

The first round matchup of the NCHSAA playoffs between South Point and Eastern Guilford could not have seemed a more even match. Both had offenses of high scoring potential although each would accomplish points in different fashion. The Raiders ground attack and solid defensive play overcame the passing attack and quick defense of the Wildcats. The resulting 41-31 victory earns the Big Red the right to continue a quest for a championship. South Point travels to face Pisgah, the #1 seed in the West, for a second round matchup. The focus is on what's dead ahead, bury the Bears!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

Pisgah defeated the Southern Guilford Storm, 29-20, in a first round contest. South Point can ill-afford to misread the final as an uncharacteristic struggle by a higher seed. Rather the recipe for success remains to be hard work and focus. A good week of practice is essential. Go Big Red!