

Game Recap

Red Raiders Catch “Fire” – Burn Cavaliers, 45-0

There are no guarantees in football. While the rule has generally been accepted for as long as the game has been played, last Friday night South Point found perhaps the lone exception to the rule. Visiting the East Rutherford Cavaliers, a team without a win on the season, the Red Raiders seemed all but guaranteed their third consecutive victory. The Big Red came in having rolled over two rivals by a combined 86-30. And the Cavaliers had scored but 21 points total in all of their previous contests. But it wasn't a victory over a struggling opponent that was guaranteed for South Point. Rather it was the guarantee that uninspired play will bring about a “fiery” halftime speech! And following a less than stellar first half, the Raiders were greeted with a halftime discourse intended to re-ignite a desire to play the brand of football that the program's success is founded on. It is always the players on the field that are credited with a team's success and coaches always accept blame for shortcomings. But the evidence of the two halves in South Point's eventual 45-0 victory over East Rutherford emphatically attests that the Big Red players and coaches communicate well. Coaches recognize the problem, players accept the coaching, and performance is improved. This is the mark of great teams.

South Point won the toss and deferred their option to receive the opening kick of the second half. In effect, the Raiders were giving the Cavaliers the first three offensive plays of the game. The Red 'D' shutdown the initial East Rutherford drive that consisted of a one yard loss and two incomplete passes under heavy rushes. The Cavaliers punted and South Point took their first possession with great field position at the Cavaliers forty-eight. A pair of runs by RB Hunter Hogue gained positive yards for the Red 'O'. QB Will Rhinehart called his number, as well as RB Cam Medlock, to add to the gains for the Raiders on the drive. But then, the unexpected happened. The series began to be marred by penalties after a run by Medlock to set up an apparent first and goal at the East Rutherford two. A holding call negated the advance and backed South Point up. That call was followed by consecutive false start penalties, two of three suffered on the drive. The promising possession had gone from a goal-to-go situation to a fourth and thirty-two punt. Beginning at their eleven, the Cavaliers gained close to the twenty. The Raiders defense dug in and held firm. They forced the game's first turnover with a gang tackling effort that jarred the ball free. LB Ryan Harris grabbed possession with teammates LB Omari Hunt and DB Lavonte McCorbin assisting in the pile. With the ball at the East Rutherford seventeen, the Raiders were in fine position to put the first six on the board. The Red 'O' moved inside the ten and faced a fourth and one to sustain the momentum. But another false start forced South Point to attempt a field goal to come away with points. K Carson Smith split the uprights from thirty yards out to give the Raiders the lead with 2:11 remaining in the quarter. After six plays, one of which was negated by a holding call, East Rutherford carried the next possession into the second stanza.

To begin the second quarter of play, the Cavaliers faced a third and seventeen. An errant pass brought the punting team onto the field and South Point would have their next opportunity for points. The Raiders drove from their thirty-two to East Rutherford territory. The drive was then halted by three false start penalties and a personal foul that moved them back near their twenty yardline. They managed to regain the Cavaliers forty-seven, but on fourth and fifteen the punt team came on the field. To this point in the game, the Raiders had proven to be their own worst enemy with penalties piling up and ending drives. The clock indicated 5:06 before the half and East Rutherford was given the opportunity to hang around in a close game. Beginning at their twenty after the South Point punt, the Cavaliers rolled out beyond their thirty in one play. In three more plays they had gained near midfield. Then the home team became plagued with miscues. Facing a third and seventeen, but with a measure of momentum and success, the East Rutherford quarterback dropped back and heaved a pass that would have gained enough for the first down. In fact a first down was made – for South Point when DB Javus Davis picked off the pass at the Raiders forty. The Red ‘O’ had another chance and they were determined to make good. A Hogue run was followed by a completed pass to SE Ethan Simmons. Runs by Hogue and RB Trevon Jones set up another completion to Simmons at the Cavaliers nineteen. Hogue then barreled to the five and then into the endzone for the first touchdown of the game with 0:21 to go before the intermission. Smith’s PAT was good and the Raiders held on to take the 10-0 lead into the half.

By South Point standards, the advantage at the start of the third was not far from an embarrassment. And one might surmise that the halftime speech likely took this into account (in terms not disclosed). Suffice to say that the message was heard – loud and clear. Rhinehart spoke of the struggles of the game. “We took them lightly”, he said, adding that the offense recognized the efforts of the defense to keep them in a position for the win. And Special Teams did their part to set things in motion in the second half. Trevon Jones returned the opening kick of the third quarter to midfield. Rhinehart picked up six and then Jones went forty-four for the score! Two plays to open the quarter, and the Big Red were up 17-0. The South Point defense continued their solid play by quickly forcing another East Rutherford punt to give the Raiders another chance. A ground-pounding drive that began at their thirty ended with six more on a five yard run by Jones. The Raiders advantage grew to 24-0 after K Daniel O’Hanlon notched the PAT with 2:53 remaining in the third. They were not done. Two incomplete Cavalier passes and a five yard loss made up the three-and-out series the Red ‘D’ had planned for getting the ball back to the offense. And with the ball at the East Rutherford forty-nine with 1:05 on the clock, South Point had plenty of time to flex some offensive muscle! As before, Rhinehart picked up six yards, but then on second down he pitched to Medlock who raced the remaining forty-three yards for the touchdown. In consecutive possessions, the Raiders had used two plays to go the necessary distance for a total of 14 points. South Point’s lead was 31-0 with time running out in the third quarter. The Cavaliers managed their forty yardline on their next drive. But then a completed pass and a tackle by DB Ben Lunsford knocked the ball loose. LB Xavier Johnson

was credited with the recovery and the Raiders took possession on a drive that would carry over into the final twelve minutes of regulation play.

With a first and ten from the East Rutherford twenty-three, South Point opened the fourth quarter with another positive drive. Hogue and Rhinehart moved to the five behind an offensive line that had corrected mistakes and taken control. Rhinehart shot through from the five for the 38-0 advantage. The Cavaliers tried to keep up a battle on their homecoming night, but after the South Point turnaround, there was no more fight in the host team. The Red 'D' forced a turnover on downs. With 6:10 to go, the Raiders drove from their twenty-three on a clock-killing drive that brought a merciful end to the Cavaliers' evening. Medlock took over under center and engineered the drive that put the final tally on the board. RB Tyson Riley figured in on the attack, carrying the ball to the East Rutherford forty-five. From there on a second and five, Medlock cut to the outside, broke three tackles, and outran the defense to the goalline. The score accounted for the final 45-0 as the Cavaliers had no answer with their final possession. The halftime challenge was confirmed, "We said, we're going to go down and put thirty-five on the board and that's what we did", said LB Jackson Risk adding that the defense was determine to play well and give the offense every opportunity.

If there is a guarantee in the game of football, it is that if a team is not playing well, they will be sufficiently reminded of the case at halftime. Sometimes a "fiery" context may be what it takes to rekindle determination and focus that define championship teams. The practice was not spared on the Red Raiders at East Rutherford. After a half of football that didn't meet South Point standards, the intermission discourse was one that would likely not be repeated during Bible School! But the message was received and the result was a 45-0 shelling of a conference foe.

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

R-S Central comes calling next week as the Raiders return to Lineberger Stadium to host the Hilltoppers. R-S Central boasts a 3-1 record with wins over East Rutherford (47-0), East Gaston (56-27), and Mountain Island Charter (48-42). The Hilltoppers only loss came against Shelby (38-22).