

## Game Recap

### Raiders Pickoff Warriors, Advance Over Erwin 48-13

Two weeks removed from their final regular season game and there was no shortage of adrenaline for South Point entering their second-round contest of the NCHSAA 5A playoffs. By virtue of their top seeding, the Raiders received a bye in the opening round. The extra week of practice enabled the Big Red to do what they'd done all year. They got "a little bit better." These words are emphasized following each contest in the team's huddle, and the intent becomes paramount now more than ever. The caliber of each opponent faced will likely improve going forward, so it would seem that the Raiders must do what it takes to remain a step ahead. But this is not what is exclusively meant by urging the team to get better. Rather the emphasis is placed on each member of the team becoming the best person and player he can be. And that begins within the heart. South Point displayed a tremendous amount of heart in the win over Clyde A. Erwin last Friday night at Lineberger Stadium. The Big Red advanced to the third round of the playoffs with a solid 48-13 win. Complementary football was on display as South Point was more than equal to the task in every phase of the game. Two timely interceptions and a fumble recovery by the defense put the offense on the field to run through the Warriors. And the Red 'O' scored on all but one possession to give the punt team the night off! A popular football slogan claims, "Passion fuels the fire, heart ignites the victory." Round three approaches and the heart of the Big Red is together and ready!

South Point won the toss and deferred their option to the second half. The Warriors took to the field to open the contest sporting a potent passing attack. Their attempts to run a no-huddle offense to keep the Red 'D' on its heels had some success in the early downs. But South Point adjusted quickly. The Warriors were held on downs, and the Raiders took over for their initial drive at the South Point 30-yard line. Erwin was ready for the Raiders ground attack from the outset, as South Point only picked up a single yard in two plays to begin the possession. But then on third down and nine, QB Patrick Blee hit a wide-open WB Walker Spargo in the middle of the field. Spargo hauled in the pass in the secondary and stutter-stepped around a defensive back to race untouched to the endzone. K Wilson London notched the PAT to give South Point the early 7-0 advantage. The Warriors went strictly to the air on their next possession, but the Red 'D' was equal to the task. DB Cayden Rumph stopped a wide receiver screen on first down, fighting through blockers to get hands on the receiver. Teammate DB Jeremiah Holt trailed the play and helped finish the tackle for loss. Two plays later Rumph picked off an Erwin pass and returned the ball to the Warriors 20-yardline to give his offense another crack at points. The Red 'O' obliged with FB Kaveaun Pless grinding out yards through the middle and grinding down the Warriors' defense. On consecutive plays, Pless carried South Point to the 1-yard line. From there, Blee punched in to put the Raiders up 14-0 with 2:04 remaining in the first quarter. The

Raiders defense did not rest on the ensuing Erwin possession. D-linemen Eddie Brach and Gregory Blair kept pressure at the line of scrimmage, pushing through with pressure on the Warriors quarterback. LB Wade Jefferies added to the pressure and was able to knock the ball free from behind as the QB stepped up into the pocket. DE Marcus Allen scooped up the fumble and returned the ball to the Warriors 14-yard line. The Red 'O' was once again in business! O-linemen Andrew Wright, Wilson London, Landon Suttle, and Jackson Penley buried the defensive line of Erwin, allowing Blee to burst through for six points. South Point moved ahead 21-0 in one play that took five seconds. And the Raiders showed no signs of slowing. Erwin carried their next possession into the second stanza.

The Warriors went to the air and managed some success moving across midfield to begin the quarter. South Point kept the pressure, forcing Erwin to cover the needed yardage in nine plays with three penalties mixed in that affected the time of possession. The Warriors cracked the scoreboard on a 3-yard run to close within two scores at 21-7. South Point matched the score on their next drive. Moving from their 44-yard line, the Raiders drove to the Erwin forty. Facing a fourth and long, South Point sent P Peyton McCarn in to punt. McCarn instead found Spargo streaking off the line of scrimmage into the open and hit him with a perfect spiral. Spargo covered the yardage needed for a new set of downs to keep the drive alive. Pless then bulled through the line for a couple of plays to move the Raiders to the Erwin 3-yard line. Spargo then took a pitch and powered across the goal line. South Point moved ahead by a 28-7 tally with under five minutes to go before the half. The Red 'D' remained stout. The Warriors continued to test the air with their left-handed quarterback. Streaking across the field from his DB position, Gavin Smith picked off a pass and toe-tapped to stay in bounds to complete the interception. In his first game back from injury, Smith proved to be in step with his defensive teammates. Asked about the feeling in his return, Smith exclaimed, "I'm just glad to be back out here with the boys for another ride! We just trust in each other and play for the one beside you," he added when questioned about the team's preparation. His interception set up the Raiders offense at their 41-yardline with an opportunity for more points in the quarter. South Point's attack drove them to the Erwin 8-yardline where Blee followed his blockers into the endzone to advance the Raiders' advantage. The Warriors carried the next possession into the intermission with South Point holding the commanding 35-7 lead.

The opening kick of the third quarter appeared to be an onside attempt. The ball failed to travel the full ten yards and went out of bounds on the Erwin side of midfield. The Red 'O' took immediate advantage of the miscue with Blee breaking free for forty-eight yards for the touchdown. The one-play, eleven second drive did little to dent the clock, but did significant damage to any comeback hopes for the Warriors! A forced punt on their next possession kept things on track for South Point. Even when a Raiders fumble late in the third quarter gave Erwin

some life, the Red 'D' efficiently reclaimed the momentum. South Point carried the 42-7 lead into the final stanza.

Caden Rumph took over under center in the fourth quarter. He, along with FB Seifer Trottier and WB Jesse Ledford, led a South Point attack that put more points on the board. Rumph's 33-yard run ended South Point's scoring at the 9:51 mark of regulation. The Raiders lead grew to 48-7. And the clock was live, only stopping with change of possession and penalties. Erwin managed a touchdown with time winding down. South Point kneeled out the final seconds and secured their advance to the third round of the playoffs with the 48-13 victory.

Getting a little bit better has been the emphasis with each practice throughout the season. And now, in the playoffs, that challenge becomes even more important. What's in the heart of each Red Raider will be what is counted on to make each one the best person and player he can be. The playoff format demands excellence with each round. "Passion fuels the fire, heart ignites the victory." Keep lighting up the victories!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

### **Notable Facts and Thoughts**

South Point hosts a powerful Monroe Redhawks squad in the third round of the NCHSAA 5A playoffs. The Redhawks made easy work of the West Rowan Falcons by a similar second round score, 49-14. The Red Raiders and Redhawks have a single common opponent in Mount Pleasant. Monroe took down the Tigers, 39-21, in late October. South Point downed Mount Pleasant in mid-September by a 32-7 count. All that matters now though is who shows up on Friday! Go Big Red!