

## Game Recap

Big South 3A Champions! South Point Downs Hunter Huss to Claim Title, 36-22

The Red Raiders shook off six years of frustration and in true champion-style returned to the top of the Big South 3A Conference! South Point needed wins in their final three contests to have a shot at the conference championship. Following back-to-back shutout victories over Forestview and North Gaston, the Hunter Huss Huskies posed the only threat to the Big Red goal. The Huskies came in licking their wounds from a loss to archrival Ashbrook and were looking to give the Raiders fits with a quick strike offense and stingy defense. The Huskies' motivation and game plan were working after two quarters of play. But the Raiders' resolve was stronger! The Red 'O' put up the points, and the Red 'D' slammed the door in the second half to secure the 23rd conference championship in South Point history. In fact, in their final four possessions of the game, the Raiders defense forced three turnovers on downs and picked off a Huskies pass to ice the win.

Hunter Huss won the toss and elected to receive the opening kickoff. Good downfield coverage by the South Point kicking team pinned Huss at the eleven-yard line to begin the drive. The Huskies quickly moved to the twenty-five and then were penalized for a false start. The second play of the Huss drive sent shockwaves through the Red faithful. An eighty-yard scamper by the Huskies QB put six on the board and gave Huss the early 7-0 advantage. The Red 'O' struggled out of the gate after being hit with two questionable chop block penalties, forcing them to play from behind the sticks. The result was a hard-fought effort but an eventual punt. South Point's special teams stepped up. A fumble on the attempted catch was quickly pounced on by LS Gavin Gibson to give the Raiders offense a new set of downs. WB Brody Crawford took a couple of pitches and helped move the ball to the Hunter Huss fifteen. From there, QB Patrick Blee bounced off bodies to the endzone for the equalizer. K Wilson London drilled the PAT to even the score at 7-7. Huss carried the ensuing possession into the second quarter.

The Huskies managed a drive to the South Point nine-yard line, setting up a first and goal. In three plays the Red 'D' allowed a scant five yards to put Huss in a fourth and goal situation from the five. A pass to the back of the endzone was off target and the Raiders took over on downs. South Point moved out of the shadow of their endzone, but the momentum was not sustained. A fumble was recovered by the Huskies in Raiders territory at the thirty-eight. Huss immediately went for "homerun" on first down. But as has been the case throughout the season, throwing the ball near DB Gavin Smith can be a bad idea for an opponent. And it was in this case! Smith grabbed his eighth interception of the season at the Huskies one to squash the scoring attempt. Once again, the Raiders made positive yardage away from their goal line, but another costly fumble thwarted their progress. This time Huss made good on their drive for points. A 3-yard touchdown run gave the Huskies the lead at 14-7 with 5:18 to go in the half. South Point's special teams again got involved. A return by RS Kham Crawford put the Red 'O' in business at the Huskies thirty-two. Crawford remained active on offense as two plays later he got behind the defense and was wide open in the middle of the field. Blee hit him with the pass and Crawford raced into the endzone to draw the Raiders even at 14-14. The Red 'D' allowed three plays on the Huskies next drive to force another punt. The punt was shanked, and South Point took over at the Hunter Huss thirty-

seven with 3:11 on the clock. A single play would give the Raiders their first lead. FB Chayne Ford took a handoff on first down and ran through the middle, 37 yards for the score. With 2:50 left before the half South Point went ahead 21-14. Unfortunately, the advantage was short-lived. Huss went to the air, and managed to convert a fourth downplay to keep the drive alive as time wound down. The Raiders were victimized by elusive QB scrambles that gave receivers time to work the field. A thirty-yard pass was completed for the touchdown to draw the Huskies within one. South Point had a chance to maintain a one-point lead going into the intermission when a Huskies celebration penalty moved the extra point try back to the 18-yard line. But it wasn't to be. Huss opted to go for two. A pass across the middle was completed and the Huskies went into the half up 22-21.

To begin the third quarter of play, South Point managed to move close to midfield. Then a fumble turned the tide. Huss recovered and took over at their forty-eight. Penalties on both squads marked the possession. But the Raiders were finally able to take over on downs at the South Point thirty-five. A ground-pounding attack moved the Raiders to the Hunter Huss seventeen. Blee then called his own number and picked up the needed yardage to put the Raiders back in front. Ford collected the two-point conversion to give South Point the 29-22 advantage. With 3:28 remaining in the stanza, Huss carried their next possession into the final quarter.

The Red 'D' allowed a couple of plays to begin the fourth before forcing a turnover on downs. The Raiders then put together a drive that seemed headed for points. They moved across midfield and faced a fourth and short at the Huss thirty-one. Ford appeared to pick up the first down, but a flag on the play went against the Raiders and they were forced to punt. Huss began the next possession at their twenty. The South Point defense was relentless in their containment. With under four minutes to go, the Huskies faced a fourth-and-one at the twenty-nine. A QB keeper swept to the left side. DL Gavin Gibson made the initial hit at the line of scrimmage and DL Zolan McCollough was on his heels to complete the wall! South Point took over on downs for the third straight Huss possession, but more importantly for the Raiders, the conference championship was coming clearer in sight. The Red 'O' took advantage of the defense's stellar work. Moving to the Huskies three with under 2:00 to go, Ford barreled in for the touchdown and the two score advantage. South Point went ahead 36-22 with 1:43 remaining. One play on the Huskies ensuing drive sealed the conference championship run. A diving interception near midfield by DB Zeke Pruitt helped seal the win. Pruitt later addressed the contest and the Huskies, "their record doesn't really say what they are as a team" adding, "we just wanted to go out there and get a stop." Commenting on the talented athletes for Hunter Huss, Pruitt admitted that the QB "got (him)" on a couple of plays, but that he just continued to play his position and tried to make a play on the ball. His pick put the finishing touch on South Point's Big South 3A title.

The Chicago Cardinals (then) won the NFL Championship in 1947. Currently the franchise Arizona Cardinals (now) has surpassed 76 years without a title, easily marking the longest title drought in all sports history. With the 36-22 win over Hunter Huss, South Point erased their own title drought after 6 years of frustration. Losing traditions roll over. Winning traditions roll on. Roll On, Big Red!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

### **Notable Facts and Thoughts**

The Raiders expect a high seeding (currently #2 in the West) as they enter the NCHSAA 3A State Playoffs. Work, work, work. Hit, hit, hit. Score, score, score. Trophy. Go Big Red!