

## Game Recap

Raiders Pound Panthers - Thump Hibriten, 30-14

After a 2-week layoff, South Point was finally able to hit the gridiron to continue a season that had entered its fourth week. A weather cancellation and an early season bye kept the Raiders off the field for an extended period before last Thursday nights matchup with visiting Hibriten. The game had been designated for recognition of First Responders and Military Veterans. And while the return to South Point Football was eagerly welcomed, the opportunity to express appreciation for everyday heroes made the contest even more special. Famed Hollywood western star, the late John Wayne, once stated, "Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway." This statement accurately describes the resolve of veterans and first responders. And it just adds to a long list of reasons we should continue to share our gratitude for their efforts. It becomes so easy to take these special groups for granted because they've always been there, and we expect that they always will be. But let us never forget that we can enjoy a high school football game, among other more important activities, because of what they've done and what they do. There is a level of courage for which we should be thankful.

Hibriten won the toss and deferred their option to the second half. The Panthers gave South Point the game's first possession and with it the opportunity to shake off any rust that may have set in over the time off. But the Big Red came out swinging! RB Brody Crawford set things in motion taking a pitch from QB Patrick Blee and racing 22 yards to the South Point 45-yardline. Two plays later he hauled in a 27-yard pass from Blee to quickly move to the Hibriten twenty-one. On the fourth play of the drive, FB Chayne Ford took a handoff through the left side and never breezed to the endzone for the touchdown. The 2-point conversion put the Raiders on top, 8-0, less than two minutes into the contest. The Red 'D' kept pace by forcing a three-and-out on the Panthers' first possession. Aided by a DL Zolan McCollough tackle for loss on 2nd down, South Point held Hibriten without positive yardage on their initial drive. The Raiders began their next drive from the South Point 37-yardline after the Panthers punt. Crawford continued to slice through the defense and was joined in the backfield by teammate RB Eric Forston. The pair picked up positive yardage on each carry to move the Red offense. Blee added his number to the mix, cutting upfield and breaking tackles from the Hibriten twenty-nine to the two for a 27-yard gain. The QB then dove through the left side for six points to advance the South Point advantage. The Raiders were successful on their second conversion of the game and moved to a 16-0 lead with 6:07 remaining in the quarter. At this point there was no evidence that "rust" had set in as South Point was off to a solid start. Hibriten finally managed some positive yardage, and it came by virtue of great downfield coverage by the Raiders defense. A scrambling QB broke free to cross midfield for the Panthers best play of the

quarter. But that would be all the red 'D' would allow as they shortly thereafter forced another Hibriten punt. The Raiders next possession carried over into the second stanza.

Once again South Point benefitted from big runs and an accurate pass to move into Panthers territory. But then things took a turn for the worse. A fumble was recovered by Hibriten, and the Panthers had for the moment shifted momentum. They were able to take advantage by chipping away and completing a long pass to move deeper into South Point territory. Faced with a fourth and inches near the Raiders 5-yardline, Hibriten managed a score to get on the board. Their 2-point conversion cut the South Point lead in half, 16-8. Things would not immediately improve for the Red Raiders. On their ensuing possession an interception by the Hibriten pumped even more life into the Panthers. The Red 'D' held tough for the final 3:55 to send the teams to the half with South Point on top.

With the ball to begin the third quarter, Hibriten put together a drive that was impressive by South Point standards. Moving downfield in 17 plays, converting on a fourth and short, and draining over nine minutes off the clock, the Panthers cut the deficit with six more points. Trailing 16-14, Hibriten had hung around and sent the wake-up call to the Red Raiders. South Point responded. On the Raiders' next drive Forston burst across midfield in two plays. The Red 'O' continued to move the ball. Blee managed a run to the Hibriten 16-yardline and Forston took care of the rest. His 16-yard scoring run, and the subsequent conversion, increased the South Point lead to 24-14. Later asked about the possible ill-effects of the extended time off, Forston said, "Coach challenged us to get better." He further emphasized that this team of Red Raiders holds to expectations that they can and will be a great team. Such confidence is a mark of championship caliber teams. The Panthers next possession carried over into the final quarter.

Hibriten was forced to punt on their initial possession of the fourth. South Point kept pounding. The Raiders worked the clock, snapping the ball deep into the play clock to shorten the game. After five plays, South Point had moved from their 20-yardline their forty-eight. On the sixth play, Forston burst through to the Hibriten eleven, and the Raiders were awarded additional yardage to the Panthers' 5-yardline due to a facemask penalty. Ford took over at fullback and promptly found the endzone on the next play. South Point moved in front 30-14 with 6:05 remaining. The Red 'D' once again shutdown Hibriten. The Red 'O' picked up the first downs needed to run out the clock and claim the victory.

South Point made good on their return to the field following a long layoff. On a night that recognized the admirable character and courage of our first responders and military veterans, the Big Red harnessed some of those great qualities and carried through to victory. South Point now faces a rival eager to gain a measure of respect in a series dominated by the Big Red. The Raiders travel to Stuart Cramer looking to calm the storm once again in the River Rumble!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

### **Notable Facts and Thoughts**

Following Thursday's game, the crowd was treated to a fireworks show to culminate the First Responders and Military Veterans recognition event. The first explosion went off at the exact moment the Coach had ended his post-game speech in the huddle. While it's well known that Big Red coaches have set off some fireworks with their speeches, this may have been the first time it was witnessed in public!