

Game Recap

South Point Falls to Kings Mountain, Drop Third Consecutive, 28-14

No more moral victories. No more encouraging words for improvement. No more "sugar coating" the season's expectations. After their third straight loss, the Red Raiders find themselves with their backs against the wall. And the next three contests will show the character of the team and determine their playoff opportunity. While it could be argued that South Point has yet to be flatly outplayed by any opponent in their losses, the fact is, if this team expects to reach its potential and move on into the postseason, victories must start stacking up. No one denies the heart, talent and athleticism of the Big Red. The effort in each game has mostly reached a peak of their capability. It is certain that as close as those contests were throughout, the opponents would just as soon not have to face the Raiders again this year. And the reality is, that could be the case unless fortunes turn NOW! South Point has been punched in the gut and kicked in the... (other places), often by circumstances outside of their control. But that doesn't matter now. What matters is the response. The plan at the beginning of the season was to quickly reach the potential and carry this proud tradition to a state championship. Former heavy-weight boxing champion, Mike Tyson, once said, "Everybody has a plan, until they get punched in the mouth." Well, that punch has been delivered and it's time for the mark of a champion to show through. The Big Red will work to turn the tide as they face conference rivals Ashbrook, Forestview, and North Gaston to close out the regular season.

Kings Mountain elected to receive the opening kick after winning the coin toss. The Mountaineers' offense came ready to play and put the Raiders on their heels early. A 9-yard touchdown run gave Kings Mountain the initial 7-0 lead before the South Point offense took the field. The Big Red answered. Carving through the Mountaineers defense, the Raiders put together a drive of 5:14 that ended with a FB Chayne Ford 13-yard run for the equalizer. K Charlie Birtwistle notched the PAT, and the score was knotted at 7-7 in the opening quarter. The defenses then settled in and the teams traded punts and Kings Mountain carried the final possession of the first into the second stanza.

Driving deep into South Point territory, it appeared the Mountaineers were poised to reclaim the advantage. But The Red 'D' bowed up. A forced fumble, and Raider's recovery, stopped the drive and shifted the momentum. South Point, though, was only able to flip the field position before giving the ball back to Kings Mountain. And following a Raiders defensive stop, the Mountaineers returned the ball to South Point for the final drive. The Raiders drove the final 6:31 off the clock before attempting a field goal that would end play in the quarter. The attempt was blocked, and the rivals headed to the intermission tied.

South Point's opening drive of the second half was halted and the Raiders had to punt. This had become a theme throughout the game as both offenses and defenses took shots and delivered some heavy blows. Kings Mountain turned the ball back over to the Raiders after being stopped on their initial possession of the third quarter. Then the Big Red got rolling again. Driving deep into the redzone, South Point jumped in front on a QB Patrick Blee 3-yard burst. The Raiders had the 14-7 advantage and looked ready to pull away following a Kings Mountain

fumble at the Raiders 23-yard line. But South Point immediately turned the ball back over, giving the Mountaineers new life. Kings Mountain made good on the fortunate turn of events by connecting on a 19-yard pass for the score. The momentum swing stung, but with time running out in the third, the Raiders had an entire fourth quarter to reclaim the advantage. And they began to do so with a drive that carried over into the final 12:00 of regulation.

A possession of over five minutes moved the Raiders into Kings Mountain territory. But South Point would have to settle for another field goal attempt. The Mountaineers' push, at times questionable, forced an errant kick and so the teams remained tied. Kings Mountain finally broke through on their next drive to take the 21-14 lead with 6:54 to go. The Raiders turned the ball over on downs with their next possession and with the momentum, the Mountaineers put up more points to account for the 28-14 final.

Coaches encourage their teams to control what you can control and focus on the next play. This message may have never been more appropriate than during the contest with Kings Mountain. The effort for South Point was there; this team rarely leaves anything left on the field. But sometimes a bad bounce, missed assignment, or call can change the complexion and perhaps the outcome of a contest. The challenge for the Red Raiders going forward is to get past "the past". South Point has taken the punch, and their backs are against the wall. The true measure of this champion will need to emerge in the next three weeks. One game at a time. One victory at a time.

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

South Point hosts the Ashbrook Greenwave and visits the Forestview Jaguars, before closing out the regular season at home against the North Gaston Wildcats. Among the lessons learned by the Raiders this season is that they know not to underestimate an opponent. Perhaps as important is to recognize that circumstances in a game can change the complexion, if not the outcome. Do what you do best. Control what you can control. Be a champion.