

Game Recap

South Point Outlasts Kings Mountain - Down Mountaineers, 28-21

“Cardio” (kahr - dee - oh): noun, informal - 1. aerobic exercise that stimulates and strengthens the heart and lungs.

For the second consecutive week the Big Red has put Raider Nation through an exercise pace that rivals the intensity of Gold’s Cross Planet Fitness Gym! (Or something like that.) South Point was thrust into the heat of battle with back-to-back contests against conference rivals, all seeking to claim a Big South 3A crown at season’s end. The Big Red remained on course with a thrilling win over Crest and followed that up with a heart-pounding victory over Kings Mountain last Friday night at John Gamble Stadium. The game against the Mountaineers, miscues notwithstanding, may have been the most complete football game played by either team this season. That’s because both teams found success in what they do best. The Mountaineers remained competitive by virtue of a quick strike offense, one that relied on big plays downfield. Kings Mountain also boasted a stout defense to challenge South Point. The Red Raiders’ offense, on the other hand, stayed true to their powerful, clock-eating ground attack, with a few passes mixed in, to put points on the board. Meanwhile the Raiders defense held the line and pressured the Mountaineers throughout the contest, sealing the win by forcing an incomplection on a potentially game-tying touchdown pass as time expired. The Big Red never gave in, rather as is their nature, they fought to the end and gained the 28-21 victory to remain atop the conference standings.

Kings Mountain won the toss and elected to receive the second half kickoff, giving the South Point offense the first possession. The Red ‘O’ went to work. The drive was of the type that typically sets the tone for a ballgame. By the time the Raiders had worked the ball down the field their game plan was obvious - ball control. Behind a solid effort by the offensive line, QB Patrick Blee, FB Chayne Ford, and RB Brody Crawford moved to the Mountaineers four-yard line. From there Blee shot through a hole up the middle and dove across the line for the touchdown. K Wilson London notched the PAT giving the Red Raiders the early 7-0 advantage. South Point converted a fourth down on the drive and the Kings Mountain D-line had success stopping the Raiders on some downs. The Mountaineers loaded the line of scrimmage, with a linebacker at times jumping into a gap over center, timing the count. This stopped the Raiders on a few plays but cost Kings Mountain inside their ten when an encroachment penalty moved South Point to the Mountaineers’ four. The clock stood at 2:41 remaining in the first quarter of play after the Big Red drive of 9:19. Ball control. After a kick return set Kings Mountain up in Raiders territory, the Mountaineers wasted little time finding the endzone. A long run from the Raiders’ forty-nine on their first play from scrimmage moved the Mountaineers to the South

Point twenty-six. Five plays later Kings Mountain tied the game on a three-yard run. With 0:32 remaining in the quarter, South Point's ensuing possession carried over into the second stanza.

The Raiders punted following a stalled drive to begin the quarter. South Point had been unable to recapture the early momentum they claimed. But the Red Special Teams changed that by flipping the field. P Dalton Skipper nailed a punt that was downed at the Kings Mountain nine-yard line to pin the Mountaineers deep. The Red 'D' took advantage. On a third downplay, Ashton Owenby from his D-line position, made a move inside his blocker and sped to the quarterback. Wrapping him up, Owenby completed the sack and forced a Kings Mountain punt. From his endzone the Mountaineers punter managed a kick that took a South Point bounce before being downed at the Kings Mountain thirty-one. Adding to their offensive versatility, RB Gavin Smith moved into the backfield for South Point. QB Cayden Rumph took turns under center and Blee moved to the FB position. Six plays later, the crew had worked to the nine-yard line. From there Ford cruised in to reclaim the lead for South Point, 14-7, with 4:35 remaining before the half. The Red 'D' continued to control the line of scrimmage and immediately forced a three-and-out on the Mountaineers next possession. Following the Kings Mountain punt, South Point drove into Mountaineers territory but were held without points as the time expired. The Raiders carried the 14-7 advantage into the half.

Kings Mountain began the third quarter just as they had their opening possession of the game. A big kickoff return across midfield quickly gained momentum for the Mountaineers. A running play netted two yards, but then a 44-yard strike downfield drew Kings Mountain even at 14-14. The first scoring drive for the Mountaineers took 2:09 while their second score came after a possession of 0:53. The teams were certainly benefiting from their strengths. Kings Mountain claimed a quick strike, big play offense and stingy defense while South Point took a hard-hitting workmen-like approach to winning the ballgame. The Raiders, in fact, went back to work on their next possession. A nine-play drive of 5:05 ended with a 14-yard touchdown pass from Blee to TE Peyton McCarn. A key play on the drive was a Ford run of 53 yards to the Kings Mountain twenty-six. O-linemen Owenby, Blake Hartness, and Strat Triplett sealed off the left side of the line while Andrew Wright and Gavin Gibson jumped off the right side of the line and met at the middle linebacker to remove him from the play. Ford darted through the hole for the big gain. Later asked about the play of his offensive line, the fullback acknowledged his appreciation for what they did. "I need them", he said, adding, "I know they've got my back, and I want them to know I've got their backs." Such teamwork is routinely on display when the Big Red takes the field, but it was perhaps never more evident than in the hard-hitting contest at Kings Mountain. The Blee to McCarn touchdown connection moved the Raiders back in front 21-14 midway through the quarter. The Mountaineers answered on their next possession. A five-yard run drew them even at 21-21. South Point carried their next drive into the final twelve

minutes of regulation, but not before a Blee run of 49 yards put the Raiders in business at the Kings Mountain 24-yardline.

On a drive that carried over from the third, and with the ball resting at the Mountaineers' twelve, Ford needed two plays to put the Big Red back on top. His 11-yard run accounted for South Point's 28-21 lead with 11:20 to go in regulation. Then the Red 'D' went to work. Kings Mountain was forced to punt on their next drive. And their defense strengthened to hold South Point on downs to get the ball back. The Raiders returned the favor, immediately forcing a Mountaineer turnover on downs. The defenses would not break. Kings Mountain forced another South Point punt and with 1:23 remaining, the Mountaineers were desperate to draw even. Moving from near midfield, Kings Mountain managed to work to the Raiders 21-yardline. But a fourth and three pass to the endzone was incomplete. DB Zeke Pruitt was in position to deflect the pass that fell to the ground as time expired. South Point survived the challenge with an amazing team effort to claim the 28-21 victory.

South Point's previous Big South 3A conference contests have been both heart stopping and heart pounding! Each hard-fought victory by the Red Raiders seemed equivalent to a cardio workout for the fans. The Big Red stayed true to their tradition of hard-hitting, grind-it-out, smash mouth football - the way the game is meant to be played. The Raiders' effort may cause a few hearts to race, or skip a beat, but one thing is for sure, our appreciation for a team that works hard and never quits deserves our appreciation. And that's Heartfelt!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

The road to a conference crown gets no easier as the Raiders now travel to Ashbrook for a matchup of top teams in the Big South 3A. The Greenwave's only blemish on their record is a 29-12 loss to Crest. Ashbrook puts up a lot of points and they give up very little so the challenge will mirror the last two weeks for South Point. The Raiders are battle tested and they will be again. Go Big Red!