
VARSITY REPORT

by Jamey Andrews

“South Point Drops OT Heartbreaker...Red Raiders Fall to Wolves, 25-24”

It's often said, following a hard-fought contest between two traditional powerhouses, “that game had everything!” The phrase is generally expressed as a description of all the positives that took place on the field and is usually exclaimed by the victors. But a game that truly “has” everything must also consider the negatives. Friday night at Lineberger Stadium, South Point hosted the Lincolnton Wolves in a highly touted contest. Both teams were coming off impressive wins and were looking to validate those victories with a good showing. But in this game that “had everything” including long touchdown runs, footballs bouncing off helmets, and overtime, both teams had their share of positives and negatives. In the end, a successful two-point conversion proved enough to hand the Raiders their first loss of the season. To start the season South Point has now experienced a chest-pumping win and a head-shaking defeat. How the team responds in the next game could define the type of season they can expect.

Lincolnton won the toss and elected to receive. It took one play from scrimmage for the Wolves to grab the lead. A 77 yard touchdown run stunned the Raiders, but with the strike taking a mere 20 seconds, there was plenty of time to bounce back. With their first possession, South Point moved the ball from the twenty yardline to midfield with Jake Alexander carrying a chunk of the load. But the Raiders would have to punt. And it became apparent the Lincolnton game plan was to build a quick lead and put pressure on South Point. With good starting field position at their forty-one, the Wolves ran a mix of plays, runs and passes, to keep the chains moving. The Red D dug in. And when Nick Farmer batted down a potential touchdown pass, the Raiders were poised to make the stop. Halting the advance at the South Point four, the Raiders forced a field goal attempt. The kick put Lincolnton up by 10 with time expiring in the first quarter. In spite of the early quick strike, both teams played ball control on offense and the Raiders knew it wasn't near time for desperation.

To begin the second, South Point faced a 2nd and 9 on a drive that carried over from the first stanza. Taking advantage of some Lincolnton penalties, the Raiders drove to the Wolves nineteen. From there Scottie Lee called his own number and bounced off of tacklers, spinning into the endzone! Thomas Lempereur added the PAT to cut the Wolves lead to three at 10-7. Sensing a shift in momentum, Lincolnton took to the air. And once again Farmer was ready. Jumping the route on a sideline pattern, Farmer intercepted the pass and carried the ball to the Wolves ten. The first and goal gave the Raiders a perfect opportunity to take the lead. But a false start miscue helped force South Point to settle for three. Lempereur's 33 yard field goal knotted the score at ten. The game with “everything” was off to its roller coaster start, and with 8:14 remaining in the first half, things were about to get crazy! Taking possession at their fourteen, Phillip Davis rode a Wolves running back to the ground for a 1 yard loss. The Red D was jacked but the Wolves were confident in their own quick strike ability. A couple of completions, an outstanding deflection by Mario Brandon, a defensive holding call, and a horse collar tackle infraction kept a drive alive for Lincolnton. The crazy part? With all the advantages, Lincolnton failed to pick up a 4th and 2 from the South Point fourteen and so they

would turn the ball over on downs. The Raiders picked up one first down to drive from the shadow of their endzone but would be forced to punt on the possession. Max Mead drilled a line drive that would have rolled for distance had it not careened off the helmet of a retreating Lincolnton player! Matthew Robinson alertly grabbed the ball on the bounce and put his offense in business at the Lincolnton 35 yardline. After a six yard Alexander run, Lee connected on a 29 yard strike to Nick Muse. Muse's catch and run put the Raiders on top 17-10 as the teams would go to the lockerooms for the intermission.

With the ball to begin the third, the Raiders had the chance to tack on to the lead. But Lincolnton was equal to the task...aided by another Raider false start miscue. South Point would punt. Mead nailed a high, long spiral deep downfield that even the return men turned to watch and admire! The Raiders downed the ball at the Wolves nine yardline. Then lightning struck. A 91 yard "pinball-type" run helped Lincolnton climb back even. The pinball effect came from the numerous tackles off of which the stocky Wolves running back was able to bounce. For the remaining 8:57 of the third quarter, the teams would trade interceptions with Farmer grabbing his second of the game. At this point, the remaining third and fourth quarter drives were marred by nearly as many penalties as plays. In fact, the fourth quarter possessions mirrored the first quarter when both teams had the ball twice. The difference was the lack of scoring by both squads. The final score in regulation stood at 17-17. The contest would be decided according to NCHSAA overtime rules with each team having possession at the opponents 10 yardline for four plays, barring penalties. South Point had the first possession and a Lee to Muse connection regained the Raiders lead. The Wolves answered and decided to go for the win. The conversion was successful with a pass completion in the back of the endzone. The heartbreaking game that had everything had ended with the Raiders falling 25-24 in overtime.

Good plays, bad plays, strange plays, unlikely plays, and penalties mark a game that could be described as having everything. The most important thing that kept the contest against the Lincolnton Wolves from being sufficiently entertaining was the final tally on the scoreboard. The coaches were concerned about the level of intensity shown by the Red Raiders throughout the contest. Next Thursday's matchup with the defending state champion Shelby Golden Lions will give the Raiders a perfect opportunity to set the tone for the type of season they expect. Fewer mistakes and four quarters of hard-hitting South Point football will get the job done! And the result will be a game that had everything...Red!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

The experience gained by what was described as a "chest-pumping" win and a "head-scratching" loss may actually serve the Red Raiders well later in the season. Better to know the pain of a heartbreaking loss now than in the last game of the season. And that this loss comes on the heels of an outstanding victory proves to this group that you're never as good as your last win or never as bad as your last loss. Plenty of time to make the statement. Time to go to work.

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