

Game Recap

Raiders Advance - Take Down Montgomery Central, 42-7

The playoff focus for South Point, emphasized in post-game huddles and practices, has been "the biggest game of the season is the next one." Last Friday night at Lineberger Stadium the Big Red earned the right to play THE biggest game of the season by easily dismantling the Montgomery Central Timberwolves. The Raiders controlled the contest from the opening kick to the final minute to move to the second round of the NCHSAA 3A State Playoffs. South Point will now host the team responsible for the only blemish on their regular season record. With the convincing 42-7 victory the Raiders will face the Ashbrook Greenwave for an opportunity to avenge an earlier stumble and continue their pursuit of a state championship. The next game will truly be the biggest game of the season! As is typically the case in which top seeds have no trouble advancing over lesser opponents in the first round of the playoffs, the Raiders crushed the will of the Timberwolves. The only bright spots for Montgomery Central were marked by the game's first and last possessions. For the other 41 minutes of play South Point left no doubt as to who would survive and advance. The Big Red scored in every quarter and were able to insert several players in the contest. The game experience will prove valuable as the season continues.

Montgomery Central won the toss and deferred their option, deciding to give South Point the contest's initial possession. It did not look to be a wise decision as the Red 'O' carved up the Timberwolves defense moving from their own twenty-nine to the Montgomery Central five. But with 6:41 remaining on the first quarter clock, the drive stalled. The Timberwolves held and took over on downs deep in their territory. The stop pumped life into the Timberwolves sideline, but the momentum was short-lived. The Red 'D' allowed four yards on three plays to force a quick Timberwolves punt. The Raiders began their second drive on the opponent's side of midfield. Moving to the six-yard line, South Point was poised to open the scoring. WB Kham Crawford took a pitch around the right side and cut back up toward the goal line. Stretching the ball across the line while in the grasp of tacklers, it appeared that Crawford had the touchdown but was marked just short. QB Patrick Blee left no doubt on the following play. Following C Reid Jefferies, the pair pushed their way across the line for six points. K Wilson London notched the PAT to give the Raiders a 7-0 lead with 1:00 left on the clock. Montgomery Central went to the air on their next possession, but to no success. South Point shut down the drive after three plays. A big rush by DB Gavin Smith and DL Zolan McCollough caused the Timberwolves punter to barely touch the ball with the kick. DL David Bray alertly dove on the ball to secure possession and good field position for the Raiders. A first down pass completion from Blee to Smith (lined up in the offensive backfield) moved South Point to the Montgomery Central nine-yard line and ended the first quarter.

To open the second stanza, Smith took a handoff to the three. From there, FB Chayne Ford burst through to advance the lead for South Point. The Raiders were up 14-0 but had no designs on cruising against the lower seeded opponent. A false start put the Timberwolves behind the chains on their next drive and the Red 'D' kept them pinned back to force another Montgomery Central punt. Taking possession near midfield, South Point quickly rushed to the Timberwolves six. From there FB Eric Forston punched through to pad the Raiders' advantage. South Point led 21-0 and would once again shut down Montgomery Central, but not before the Timberwolves would convert two first downs on the

drive. It would be their first made conversion of the game. The Red 'D' stiffened and managed to force another punt. But on the ensuing drive, the Raiders cost themselves on a muffed pitch that was recovered by Montgomery Central. The Timberwolves found some success moving the ball downfield and managed the South Point thirteen before "pick-off specialist" Gavin Smith stepped in! Smith intercepted a pass at the goal line and returned to the Montgomery Central forty-six. The clock read 0:18 before the half and that was plenty of time for the Red 'O' to strike again! An 8-yard completion from Blee to SE Zeke Pruitt put the ball at the Timberwolves thirty-eight. On the next play, SE Chris Stowe stopped and started down the sideline giving Blee a chance to pump fake. Stowe then sped past defenders and hauled in a pass from Blee to put six more on the board for South Point. The Raiders carried the commanding 28-0 lead into the half.

The third quarter marked more of the same for the Montgomery Central offense against the more powerful South Point defense. Flags, inexplicably, began to fly after the half causing there to be fewer possessions (SP-1, MC-2) by both squads in the third. The offensive effort of the Timberwolves in the quarter consisted of a punt and a drive that carried over into the fourth. In between, the Raiders put another touchdown on the board. The lone South Point drive though was marred by several penalties against both teams. Still, the Raiders managed to kill the clock with a seven-minute drive that ended with an 8-yard Blee run to put South Point up 35-0 with 2:16 remaining. The third quarter ended with the Timberwolves in possession of the ball.

Facing a fourth-and-eight at the Raiders 22-yardline, Montgomery Central completed a pass that gained six yards. South Point took over on downs and began to insert substitutes. The Raiders did not mount a drive on their first possession of the final stanza but managed to eat away some clock and gain more valuable playing time for several players. Following a South Point punt, the Timberwolves were again held on downs and the Raiders took over at the Montgomery Central 46-yardline. With QB Cayden Rumph under center, FB Josh Crawford-White became the workhorse of the drive. On consecutive handoffs, Crawford-White moved the ball to the Timberwolves twenty-four. From there Rumph faked the handoff to Crawford-White and pitched to RB Jesse Ledford. Ledford cut up field, broke a tackle and raced into the endzone. South Point went up 42-0 as the game neared its end. The touchdown would be Ledford's first and he was especially excited as he commented on his contribution. "It was incredible", he said, adding "they were perfect" when asked about the blocking of the offensive line and his wide receiver teammates. Ledford further addressed the team when questioned about the potential to advance through the playoffs. "We've got the heart and passion to play, and fight", indicating the teams' belief in one another that their goal can be accomplished. With 1:48 remaining in regulation, and given the score, the clock became live. Montgomery Central managed to put seven on the board as time expired on the ensuing kickoff. With the final 42-7, South Point advances to the second round of the playoffs.

The Raiders took care of business last Friday night at Lineberger Stadium in the first round of the NCHSAA 3A State Playoffs. The victory over the Montgomery Central Timberwolves enables the Raiders to now play in the biggest game of the season...the next one. And with a chance to end the season of the team responsible for their only mark in the loss column, the Big Red is sure to be ready to bust out of

the gate! The Ashbrook Greenwave comes to town for a round two playoff matchup. It will be THE biggest game of the season!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

On a wall of the indoor football practice facility at Clemson is a schedule of the Tigers' opponents each season. Along with the date is a place for the opponent's name. It's likely that many programs have a similar posting, yet the difference for the Tigers is that in each space the name listed as the opponent is "Clemson". The message is that the Tigers can be their own worst enemy, and toughest opponent, if they beat themselves in a game. The lesson would serve the Raiders well as they prepare for the contest against the Greenwave. Do your job. Take care of business. Advance...to the biggest game of the season. Go Big Red!