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# VARSITY REPORT

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*by Jamey Andrews*

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“Relentless...Raiders Demolish Wildcats, 64-6”

The question to be answered after last week's lopsided victory, a shutout against a conference opponent, was how would South Point follow-up such a dominating performance? The answer? With a bone-crushing, teeth-jarring, knock-down, drag-out annihilation of another conference foe! One week removed from a 48-0 drubbing of Lake Norman Charter, the Red Raiders hosted the North Gaston Wildcats at Lineberger Stadium. And the Red Raiders were far less than cordial hosts! With a mirrored performance, South Point once again scored in every quarter to put a game away. The Wildcats may have limped in to the contest, but they were shown no mercy. The Red Raiders turned a good week of practice into an outstanding performance and are continuing to improve for a solid playoff run. A single conference matchup remains and the challenge for the Raiders is to maintain the momentum they've established in the season's second half.

North Gaston won the toss and decided to let their defense set the tone for the contest by deferring the option. South Point quickly proved that would be a bad decision by the Wildcats. Starting with the ball at the Raiders 38, Fullback Jake Alexander carried to the North Gaston 29 yardline. Then from the Wildcats 29, wingback Nick Farmer quickly carried to the endzone. Farmer who is a regular on defense has seen time in the offensive backfield and has performed well. “People are just stepping up,” said Farmer, implying that the team has really come together. The game clock stood at 11:35. Two plays covered sixty-two yards in 25 seconds and it was the Red offense that set the early tone of the contest. Kicker Thomas Lempereur's PAT was booted high and true and although the lead was a single score at 7-0, the sense was that the rout was on! If confirmation of the dominance was needed, it came on the ensuing North Gaston possession. Linebacker Nathan Hamilton intercepted a Wildcats pass and gave the Raiders another shot in North Gaston territory. A 34 yard pass from Scottie Lee to Nick Muse put the Raiders at the Wildcats thirteen. The two would connect again on a six yard pass that put six on the board. South Point had moved to a 14-0 advantage and they gave no indication of letting up. The Red ‘D’ quickly forced a three-and-out. On the fourth down punt play the snap was mishandled. Adding insult to injury, the bull rush by the Raiders special team caused the Wildcats punter to kick and then fall on the ball in the endzone for a safety. Two more points went up on the home side of the scoreboard as South Point would move ahead by a 16-0 count. The first quarter had yet to reach the halfway point (6:20) and the Raiders would quickly strike again following the free kick. Wingback Caleb Gibson would have his number called a couple of times and he would take the ball down to the three from the North Gaston 49 yardline. Lee then pitched to Mario Brandon who cruised into the endzone to advance the lead. South Point was already comfortably ahead but would cross the goal line once more before the first stanza would close. After a Wildcats touchdown on a long sideline run made the score 23-6, Lee would call his own number and break through from 18 yards out to end the first quarter scoring and put South Point in front by an astounding 30-6 mark. All that remained was to see how much fight

the Wildcats had left for the remaining 36 minutes of regulation and whether the Red Raiders could sustain the onslaught.

To begin the second, North Gaston carried a possession over, but was forced to punt. South Point took possession on the home side of midfield at the forty-nine. Powering through the Wildcats defense, Lee, Alexander, and Brandon drove to the four. From there, Lee carried over for the Raiders fifth touchdown and a 36-6 advantage. South Point was rolling, clearly dominating in every phase of the game. Four different players had scored for South Point on offense and three more would get their opportunities soon. Add to that arsenal a defense and special teams effort that is capable of not only setting up scores, but putting points on the board themselves and the potent combination is a real threat as the playoffs draw near. North Gaston managed some yardage on their next drive only to fumble the ball back to the Raiders. An initial hit by Hamilton, who was then quickly joined by defensive tackle Payton Graham and defensive end Lawrence Haley, jarred the ball loose. Safety Max Mead alertly picked up the ball and sped to the endzone. The Red Raiders had raced to a 43-6 advantage as the intermission approached. With the big lead the Raiders were able to insert substitutions in key positions. For the short remainder of the quarter, the teams played through a few mistakes with neither mounting a serious threat. South Point took the 43-6 advantage into the locker room.

With the ball to begin the third, North Gaston, once again, ran into the wall that was the Red 'D'. Managing a single yard in three plays, the Wildcats would punt and Mead would set his offense up at the North Gaston 34 yardline. The short field served South Point to a quick score. Putting his name in the scoring column, Alexander carried through the line from the 3 to add six to the Raiders lead. With the PAT, the 50-6 advantage caused the game to be played with a live clock the rest of the way. Muse picked off a Wildcats pass on a first down play and the linebacker rumbled to the North Gaston 21 yardline. Keaton Hale took over at quarterback and drove the Red 'O' to the one. From there, Gibson dove over the pile for his first touchdown and 57-6 South Point advantage. The score mercifully carried the game into the final quarter and, for the Wildcats, this was like a light at the end of the tunnel. (No. It wasn't a train. They had already been hit by that!)

After a North Gaston punt on the first possession of the final stanza, Hale would become the seventh offensive player to score for South Point when he ran in from eight yards out. Hale benefitted from the outstanding blocking effort from the offensive line. At this point even the offensive line had backups in position and the beat went on! The scoreboard tilted heavily in favor of the Red Raiders at 64-6 and the clock finally rolled to zeroes. South Point had thoroughly dominated a conference opponent for the second consecutive week. Asked about the dominance of the team and especially the offensive line, center Ethan Jackson began his response in unprecedented fashion. It's not uncommon to hear ball carriers credit the linemen for their success. But Jackson put a twist on the compliment. "We go into it knowing we have a lot of athletes in the backfield" and "we know their speed, strengths, and weaknesses, so we block based on (those)", said Jackson. The lineman added, "Got to give it up to the backs, running the ball the way they did tonight, definitely they were getting after it." His comments are a reflection of a team with a strong will and even stronger character.

South Point followed up a dominating performance with another against a conference foe. The Raiders scored early and often and were able to give several backups valuable reps. This could pay dividends in the playoffs and the way this team has matured throughout the season makes them a legitimate threat through the post season. But before that happens there's one more small matter of business to take care of in the regular season. It turns out there's a team a few miles away that has boasted a swagger this year unlike they've had in their short history. Their expectation is to block South Point's advance and in fact set the Red Raiders back a few paces in their run for a championship. The talk, as they say, is cheap. The truth will be on the field!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

### **Notable Facts and Thoughts**

It has been suggested that, with South Point's schedule this year, it's not likely they'll see better teams the rest of the way than what they've already matched up against. The value of a tough schedule will be realized in the coming weeks. The Red is firing on all cylinders at the right time. Another positive is the number of players that have now taken snaps this year. The game experience is valuable. Hopefully the only thing "cooling off" in the weeks ahead will be the weather!

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