

Game Recap

Raiders Pummel Wildcats, 49-14, Prep For Post Season

Following an emotional double overtime victory over Forestview, South Point had but a single challenge remaining prior to the post season. A conference tilt with North Gaston seemed little more than a weak tune-up for the Raiders given the struggles of the Wildcats this season. North Gaston claimed but a single victory this year, a 20-19 win over Hunter Huss. And with nothing to lose and everything to gain from a confidence standpoint, the Wildcats had the opportunity to play spoiler to the Red Raiders playoff run. Meanwhile the toll of South Point's win over the Jaguars was yet to be known. Letdowns are not unprecedented. And while much was publicized about a potentially record-setting passing attack by North Gaston, the stage was set for a contest that could be as entertaining as it could be costly. Preparation was the key. And the Big Red did not disappoint on the scoreboard. The Raiders came out firing on all cylinders to thoroughly pound the Wildcats 49-14. But the game was not without its flaws.

With the ball to open the game, North Gaston ran three plays and faced a fourth and short deep in their own territory. Again, playing with an attitude of nothing to lose, the Wildcats offense remained on the field. The Red 'D' met the challenge and stuffed the advance, giving the Raiders offense their first chance in excellent field position. A 1st and 10 immediately became a 1st and 5 after an encroachment penalty against North Gaston. Four plays later, RB Tyson Riley bolted through from nine yards out for the game's first points. K Charles Birtwistle notched the PAT and South Point had the early 7-0 advantage. Things did not improve for the Wildcats on the ensuing possession. An errant snap on third down doomed a play and forced North Gaston to punt. The punt struck a Wildcat blocker and South Point took over at the North Gaston twenty-five yardline. The drive started and stalled several times due to penalties on both sides. Finally, facing a 3rd and 16 from the Wildcats twenty, Riley broke off left tackle and raced untouched to the endzone. The Raiders lead moved to 14-0 with time remaining in the quarter. With their third possession, the Wildcats managed some success nearing midfield. On a 1st and 10 from their forty-one, the Wildcat QB whistled a pass across the middle. DB Jaquis Rumph stepped in front of the receiver and picked off the pass, returning to the North Gaston seventeen. Following a pair of uncharacteristic losses on triple option runs, QB Elijah Phiffer opted to go to the air. His third down loft was hauled in by TE Jackson Blee for six more. South Point's first quarter lead grew to 21-0 with the Wildcats yet to cross into Raiders territory. Yet another three and out forced another North Gaston punt and Return Specialist Will Ross put the Red 'O' in business with a return to the Wildcats twenty-three. A series of costly penalties on the Raiders backed them up to the thirty-seven. To make matters worse, from there the down and distance was first and goal to go. A handoff to Riley up the middle and thirty-seven yards later, South Point was up 28-0. The quarter came to a merciful end for North Gaston with the Wildcats in possession.

Facing a 3rd and 7 to begin the second stanza, North Gaston converted on a pass play and hit another to cross midfield. But a stuff by the Red 'D' on 4th and 3 at the Raiders 29 ended the

Wildcats hope. South Point began at their thirty-one, marking their worst starting field position of the game. RB Chayne Ford became the featured back and toted the ball for three consecutive plays. His third carry from 16 yards out put another six on the board for South Point. The Raiders were in complete control, 35-0, with over eight minutes to go before the half. Following the kickoff, North Gaston was allowed three more plays by the Raiders defense. They advanced the ball one yard before punting again. South Point took over at the Wildcats thirty-four after the punt bounced out of bounds. The Raiders did nothing with the field position though. Instead, due to a series of penalties the drive stalled and served nothing more than to give the coaching staff plenty to drill on in the week leading into the playoffs. North Gaston took over at their seven yardline. A quick-hitter moved them out to the thirty and pumped life into the offense. The Red 'D' did not allow it to last and the Wildcats were again forced to punt. The Red 'O' took over at midfield and quickly drove to the North Gaston three yardline. Ford bolted in for the 42-0 advantage that would send the teams to the lockerrooms for the half.

With the ball to start the third, South Point began play with several backups on the field. Flags continued to fly and the penalties continued to mount for the Raiders. The most costly miscue came on a 1st and goal play from the North Gaston five. A fumble was recovered by North Gaston, breathing life into their offense. But they soon returned the favor as play on the field continued to spiral downward. South Point held the ball on the ensuing drive as time expired in the third quarter.

With the ball at the Wildcats eight yardline to begin the final 12 minutes, the Raiders ran a series of plays, converting a fourth down, en route to a QB Ashton Green keeper up the middle for a score. South Point held the 49-0 lead and the remainder of the contest would continue to provide opportunities for players to experience live game action. The Wildcats got on the board with their next possession and trailed 42-7. North Gaston would immediately strike again on a fumble return for a touchdown on the Raiders next possession. The score moved to 49-14 in the contest that had long since become academic.

After an emotional double overtime win at Forestview, South Point seemed primed to be surprised by a North Gaston Wildcats squad with nothing to lose and everything to gain in taking down the Raiders. Fortunately South Point did enough to pull away with the convincing victory, but the effort was far less than flawless and there is much work to be done if the Raiders are to have a successful run in the playoffs. The first test comes at home against the Eastern Guilford Wildcats. In six of nine games this season, the Wildcats have scored 40+ points and for the year have averaged giving up just under 16 points per game. So Eastern Guilford seems to be a balanced squad with a potent offense and stingy defense. Time to go to work, Red!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

South Point shares no common opponents with Eastern Guilford, but on paper the teams appear evenly matched. The Raiders will host as the #16 seed while the Wildcats enter as the #17 seed. Playoff football begins. Win and advance. Go Big Red!