

Game Recap

Raiders Run Wild, Trounce Wildcats, 55-0

One of the most storied rivalries in professional football is witnessed when the Chicago Bears and Green Bay Packers take the field. The battles began in the early 1920s and after the third meeting the teams have engaged at least twice each season. A scan through the history of the rivalry turns up fascinating, as well as trivial, facts. Green Bay holds an edge in the series (104-95-6). Chicago claims association with the most NFL Hall of Fame inductees (34-33). And the Packers have outscored the Bears, 3637-3519 in contests dating back to 1921. Of the six ties, one ended with neither team cracking the scoreboard, 0-0, the lowest score possible in any competitive football game. But from a scoring standpoint, two specific contests stand out among all others based on the improbability of the outcomes. In 1932, Green Bay crushed the Bears, 2-0! And in 1938, Chicago reclaimed those two points with a 2-0 shellacking of the Packers! A search of professional football reference reveals that five games with this final score have occurred over time. But the Bears and Packers remain as the only two still affiliated with the NFL. The point of these “factoids” is to suggest that in rivalry games anything can happen. The improbable could take place; the impossible could transpire. Could similarly story lines and parallels be expected from this year’s meeting between conference rivals South Point and North Gaston?! In a word, NO! And in a few more words, NOT EVEN CLOSE! The Big Red expected a quick run through the Wildcats to get to the postseason and that’s exactly what happened. A 55-point outburst in the first half propelled the Raiders to victory over the Wildcats. The Raiders now look forward to a deep run through the playoffs.

North Gaston won the toss and deferred their option to the second half, giving South Point the game’s first possession. The Wildcats attempted an onside kick to start the game. The Raiders covered the kick and began play at their 49-yardline. From the WB position, Will Ross took the initial pitch around the right side to the Wildcats’ 4-yardline. Three plays later, WB Harrison McKinney took the same pitch and a similar route into the endzone for the touchdown. K Charlie Birtwistle nailed the PAT, and the rout was on! LB Colby Hamilton pounced on a North Gaston fumble two plays into the Wildcats first drive and the Raiders ‘O’ was back in business from the North Gaston 19-yardline. On first down, QB Patrick Blee carried to the three and then FB Cam Medlock carried

across for the 14-0 advantage. The Red 'D' allowed three more North Gaston offensive plays for a net -2 yards before forcing a punt. After an incomplete pass and a Medlock run, Blee hit SE Aaron Chaney in the corner of the endzone for six more. The pass covered nine yards and put the Raiders up 21-0 with 6:57 remaining in the first quarter. The overmatched Wildcats could muster no offense and were forced again to punt after a three-and-out series. South Point returned on offense after Ross weaved his way to midfield with the punt return. Blee went immediately to the air. He laid a perfect spiral into the hands of TE Jackson Blee who had outrun the defense to complete the 50-yard scoring strike. The Raiders had their fourth score of the initial stanza and the scoreboard tilted heavily in their favor, 28-0. The Raiders defense continued to flex the muscle, led by LB Winter Kincaid. Kincaid registered a tackle for loss and a sack on the next North Gaston possession, forcing the Wildcats punt team to return to the field. At this point 3:10 remained in the first quarter of play and South Point showed no signs of stopping the onslaught after scoring on four consecutive possessions. Once again, play began at midfield for the Raiders and Blee covered that distance in one snap for the score. His touchdown run pushed South Point in front 34-0 with 2:59 to go. The Wildcats continued to struggle at the hands of the Raiders defense. Another punt gave South Point their fifth possession of the quarter. They carried the drive into the second stanza.

Two plays into the second quarter, Blee ran in from 13 yards out for the Raiders' sixth touchdown of the game. The lead moved to 41-0 and it appeared things could not get worse for North Gaston. Things did. A first down pass attempt was tipped by LB Brock Wilsey and Hamilton picked the ball off in-air for his second takeaway. QB Elijah Phifer took over under center and the Raiders were afforded the early opportunity to get backups into the game. Phifer ran in from 12 yards out to push the South Point advantage to 48-0. At that point the clock went live. The ensuing Wildcats possession began at their 10-yardline. An errant snap on third down dropped them back to the 5-yardline and forced yet another punt. CB Micah Stowe set up for the return and he carried the Raiders to a 1st and goal at the North Gaston seven. Phifer pitched to WB Dawson Tobin who then covered the needed seven yards for six more. South Point moved in front to what would become the final 55-0. With the clock mercifully running, the remainder of the half blistered by. The teams headed to the intermission with the outcome long since decided.

For the remainder of the contest, throughout both the third and fourth quarters, the teams traded possessions. South Point was able to "empty the bench" to give players time on the field in game situations ahead of the upcoming playoffs. CB Will Abram

expressed the importance of getting playing time. "It gives the group all around great experience", he said, adding that it was an important learning opportunity. He and teammate FB Javonte Lowery admitted they were aware of the support that came from the sidelines as they were doing their part to help the team on the field. "We work on this every week", said Lowery. And he emphasized that the team would continue to work hard as the second season approaches. Both players addressed the speed of the game admitting that it was a "solid pace". The attitude and resolve is encouraging as their determination in practice pays off in live game action.

In the history of great football rivalries, statistics and game stories provide bragging rights for the team with the upper hand. In their long-standing rivalry, the Chicago Bears and the Green Bay Packers have battled to memorable outcomes on the gridiron. Most notable and historic may be the two games that were won (one by each team) by scores of 2-0, proving that rivalries tend to give rise to the remarkable. Such would not be the case for the South Point-North Gaston contest! The Red Raiders made quick work of the Wildcats with a 55-0 trouncing that sent the Big Red into the playoffs and the Wildcats back to the drawing board. Next up? Doesn't matter. We're Red and Ready!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

FWIW* - The Raiders host the Red Tornadoes of Hickory in a first round showdown. The teams had no common opponents during the season. Hickory did fall to undefeated East Lincoln, 28-12. And the Mustangs demolished a pair of South Point opponents this year (Forestview, 53-0, Lincolnton, 27-0).

*For What It's Worth