
VARSAITY REPORT

by Jamey Andrews

“South Point Advances to Western Regional Final...Pummel Pisgah, 42-0”

For the third consecutive season, the Red Raiders will be returning to the Western Regional Final of the NCHSAA 3A State Playoffs. South Point is the defending champion of the western region and will be seeking another opportunity to play for a state championship. The Raiders advanced by thoroughly pounding the Pisgah Bears in a contest that was obviously more competitive on paper than it turned out to be on the field. The Red offense was efficient on the ground and the defense was “lights out” solid in the Raiders 42-0 victory. The undefeated Hibriten Panthers stand between the Raiders and a return to the state final, and will be looking to derail the Red in their quest. South Point is on a remarkable roll, easily dispatching opponents throughout the first three rounds of the playoffs. But like season records in the playoffs, what happened in the past means nothing. All that matters is a clear focus on the goal that lies ahead. And that goal will be reached as long as the team continues to play “Red Raider” football.

South Point won the toss and deferred the option, giving the Bears the ball and the initial opportunity to put points on the board. It would be an opportunity that would, throughout the game, prove elusive! On their first drive, Pisgah managed a few pass completions to work the ball from their 30 to the Raiders 38 yardline. But back-to-back sacks by defensive end Lawrence Haley and linebacker Nathan Hamilton pushed the Bears back across the fifty. The plays did more than stall the Pisgah drive, rather the impressive defensive stand set the tone for the game and immediately grabbed momentum for the Red Raiders. It could now be said that when the Red ‘O’ took the field following the Bears’ punt, the ROUT was on! On the first offensive play from scrimmage from the Raiders’ 14, tackle Larry Dowdy blew off the line and delivered a crushing block on the Bears middle linebacker. Fullback Jake Alexander burst through the gaping hole and sprinted 66 yards to the Pisgah twenty. Four plays later wingback Nick Farmer took a pitch around the left side nine yards for the touchdown. Kicker Thomas Lempereur’s PAT was true and the Raiders had the early 7-0 lead. The five play drive was far removed from the twelve plays, clock milking drives employed by South Point in the second round contest, but the domination at the line of scrimmage was equally paramount to the success of the offense. Two plays into the Bears next possession, linebacker Nick Muse went horizontal for an interception that would give South Point the ball at the Pisgah twenty-two. From there, quarterback Scottie Lee called his own number and worked a drive that would end with an 11 yard touchdown run by Alexander. The Raiders had opened up a 14-0 advantage with both the offense and defense figuring prominently in the scoring drives. The teams would trade punts in the final four minutes of the first quarter.

On a drive that extended from the first into the second quarter of play, Pisgah managed some success on a mix of plays. The Bears drove from their 42 to the Raiders 15 yardline. The Red ‘D’ stiffened and forced a 32 yard field goal attempt. The kick was pushed wide right and the Raiders first half shutout remained intact. The teams would again trade punts as both defenses flexed some muscle. Finally, on a Bears drive that began at their 12 with 4:24 to go before the half, the Red ‘D’ would step up as they had earlier. On a second and eight from the

14 yardline, safety Nathan Silver stepped in front of a Pisgah pass, picked it off and raced twenty yards for the Raiders third touchdown. South Point had built a 21-0 lead as the teams headed to the locker rooms. One team had twenty-four regulation minutes remaining in their season, so a lot depended on the adjustments made during the intermission.

With the ball to begin the third quarter, South Point returned to their success on the ground experienced at the games outset. Return specialist Max Mead put the Raiders in great shape with a kickoff return to the South Point 49 yardline. In two plays the Red 'O' moved to the Pisgah forty-four. From there it took one play for Alexander to collect his second touchdown of the contest, a 44 yard run. Again, the offensive line had delivered sealing blocks that opened a clear lane for the fullback. The Raiders lead grew to 28-0 just over a minute into the second half. And the Red would continue to cause things to go south for the Bears. The South Point defense forced a three-and-out possession and the ensuing punt was shanked out of bounds. The Raiders took over at the Pisgah 46 yardline. The offensive line anchored by center Ethan Jackson and on the left side by Dowdy and guard James Granson had figured into the scoring by clearing the way for Alexander's long runs. With this possession, the right side of the line with guard Victor Hernandez and tackle Riley Nichols opened the lane for Alexander. One play and 44 yards covered by the fullback put South Point up 35-0 with 9:31 to go in the third. Desperation had long since set in for the Bears. They managed some quick-hitter plays that moved the ball on the ensuing drive from their 10 to the Raiders 42 yardline. A sack by Matthew Robinson pushed Pisgah back to midfield and helped to reignite the Red 'D'. On the next play Muse grabbed his second interception of the game and the linebacker wove his way through traffic toward the endzone. On the play, the character and resolve of the entire South Point Red Raiders football team became evident. Every defender broke up field with Muse. And in impressive and unselfish manner, every player looked to engage in a block to spring their teammate. The effort on this single play signaled the determination of this group of Red Raiders. The sixty yard return for the touchdown put the Raiders up 42-0 and with 4:00 remaining in the third quarter, the clock would roll continuously. Another Pisgah punt would close out the quarter and the final twelve began.

With the overwhelming lead, the Raiders inserted several backups and the team continued to battle on the field. The regulation time quickly wound down and the Raiders were able to control both the time and the opponent as the final whistle blew. South Point had, in dominating fashion, ended the Pisgah Bears 2016 football season. The Raiders earned four more quarters of play.

For the second consecutive season, South Point will play for the Western Regional Championship of the NCHSAA 3A State Playoffs. A prolific offense and stingy defense has gained the Raiders a deep run in the playoffs. Linebacker Nathan Hamilton summed up the Raiders effort. "We don't take plays off" said Hamilton, implying that South Point is eager and determined on every play and in every phase of the game. The "lights out" effort put the lights out for Pisgah. Now the road to Wake Forest (site of the state championship) runs through Hibriten. And next week the Red Raiders will have their chance to... "Run through Hibriten!"

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

Hibriten, like South Point, is said to be a team that has continuously improved as the season has progressed. The Panthers are undefeated and will certainly pose a challenge for the Red Raiders. Hibriten has scored over 60 points in three contests and have put up 50+ in four other games. The Panthers defense is equally skilled, having amassed five shutout victories. The magnitude of the contest is no secret. Four more quarters...

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