

Game Recap

“A Victory Of Biblical Proportions...Almost...Red Raiders Cruise, 49-6”

BELMONT – Former Auburn University Football Coach, the late Ralph “Shug” Jordan once commented, “Always remember, Goliath was a 40-point favorite over David.” While his facts are flawed (we now know that David had the upper hand!), his statement contains a message that should stretch across all locker rooms and apply to all motivational speeches. After all at any given point in a season, the favorite may become the underdog and the underdog become the favorite. It’s why, as they say, you have to play the game! In the annual Homecoming contest last Friday night at Lineberger Stadium, conference unbeaten South Point hosted conference winless R-S Central (R-S). The matchup, on paper, and on the field, seemed a true David vs. Goliath battle. And in fact, that’s exactly how the game turned out, albeit with a drastically different outcome than from the treasured Old Testament Biblical account! R-S won the opening toss, elected to defer the option and give the Raiders the first shot with the ball. From that point, things went downhill for the Hilltoppers. In forty-eight minutes of regulation play, South Point scored early and often on offense. And the defense slammed the door on R-S to claim the convincing 49-6 victory.

With the opening kick and a drive that began from their own forty-three yardline, the Red Raiders wasted little time finding the endzone. The initial scoreboard tilt came after three snaps and seventeen seconds of play. A 25-yard slant, catch and run, from QB Keaton Hale to SE Ray Grier netted the first 6 for South Point. K Cade Ratliff drilled the ensuing kickoff into the endzone for the touchback and the Red ‘D’ took the field. Ratliff would prove a valuable weapon as each of his four kickoffs in the first quarter reached the endzone, assuring no return yardage for the Hilltoppers. With the ball R-S set out to answer. After picking up a yard on first down, the Hilltoppers attempted a pitch on second down. OLB Tanner Canterbury shot behind the line and dropped the ball carrier for a six yard loss. Canterbury’s quick reaction set the tone for the South Point defense as the Red Raiders sustained a high level play throughout the game. The Hilltoppers were forced to punt and the Red ‘O’ once again took control. Benefitting from outstanding field position at the R-S thirty-nine, the Raiders would again garner points in three plays. FB Naseem Jones carried twice to pick up a fresh set of downs at the Hilltoppers twenty-eight. Then Hale called his own number, cut up the middle, and raced to the endzone for the touchdown. Jones capped off the scoring drive with the two-point conversion and South Point went up 14-0 with 8:35 to go in the first. R-S had no answers for the Red Raiders’ quick start. Facing a second and twelve on their next possession, DB Nick Gange blanketed a receiver out of the backfield and successfully broke up a pass. Gange’s teammate, LB Omari Hunt was facing the play and alertly grabbed the ball before it hit the ground for the interception. Hunt’s return put South Point at the Hilltoppers’ thirteen yardline. Gange would later explain that it was “hard work in practice” that aided the Red ‘D’. When asked about the need to avoid complacency against a winless opponent he added, “We were prepared for it.” His words were backed up in all phases, offense, defense, special teams. With the ball and deep in R-S territory, Hale ran twice, picking up the needed yardage for the 21-0 advantage. On the ensuing drive, yet another Hilltopper punt was forced by South Point’s defense. The Raiders’ fourth drive would begin at

the R-S thirty-three. With the big lead, South Point was able to freely rotate players. QB Jamani Leeper took over under center. On first down, Leeper hit SE Jammari Lewis for a nine yard completion. Jones then picked up the first down, rambling down to the R-S eight. RB Caleb Gibson then took an inside handoff and worked his way into the endzone. The Raiders moved in front by a 27-0 count with 3:39 remaining in the first. The Hilltoppers finally found some rhythm on offense. A pass completion, and an encroachment penalty on South Point, moved the ball across midfield. With the measure of confidence, R-S launched a deep ball to try to catch the Red 'D' off guard. DB Tré Glen was ready. Running step for step in coverage, Glen made a play on the ball and grabbed the team's second interception at the South Point fourteen. The Raiders ended the minor threat and carried the possession into the second quarter.

The second stanza began with the Raiders facing a 2nd and 12 from the South Point forty-eight. Leeper dropped back and lofted a 43-yard heave to Grier at the R-S eight. A penalty on the Hilltoppers moved the ball to the three. Gibson took another inside handoff and carried over for his second touchdown and a 35-0 South Point lead. With their fifth drive of the contest, R-S moved out just beyond their forty. Damage from a mishandled snap was avoided by a Hilltopper recovery. But on the next play an errant pitch was scooped by Canterbury and with the help of teammates the ball taken down to the R-S ten. A Leeper to RB Devon King connection moved the ball to the one. Jones then punched through for the 42-0 advantage. Customarily a deficit of this magnitude would force a live clock. Unfortunately for the Hilltoppers the rule only applies in the second half and there was still 8:20 to go before halftime. With the ensuing possession, the Hilltoppers finally managed some success moving the ball. The Raiders inserted backups, trying different combinations for the defenders on the field and R-S found some holes. But the Red 'D' slammed the door on a 4th and 13 when LB Josh Hicks sacked the scrambling Hilltopper quarterback. With even more backups on the field, the Raiders offense began at the South Point forty-two. Penalties mounted, and the drive stalled forcing the Red Raiders to punt for the first time in the game. The stall was short-lived though as a 2nd and 10 pass was picked off by King, who was playing on the defensive side of the ball. King reversed his field and set up his blocking perfectly to glide into the endzone. South Point had advanced to a 49-0 lead as time expired in the first half.

With the huge lead to begin the third quarter, the clock went live, stopping only at official junctures (team-called timeouts, injury, etc.). Both teams would thus have a single possession in the stanza and neither mustered a scoring chance before the clock hit zeroes.

After a Raider punt in the fourth, R-S took 4:11 off the time remaining to erase the "0" from the scoreboard. A two yard dive netted 6 for the Hilltoppers. With the remaining 6:58, South Point drove downfield, picking up first downs and milking the clock. QB Jake Beatty took over under center and engineered the drive that would end the game. Beatty measured the play clock on every snap and ended the game at the Hilltoppers five yardline.

In nearly every sporting event, one combatant is, stating the obvious, generally favored over the opponent. And in some cases, the expected margin of victory (or defeat) is likened to the Biblical account of David vs. Goliath. During South Point's homecoming, the heavy favorite and conference undefeated Red Raiders hosted the conference winless R-S Central Hilltoppers. The contest took on the characteristics of the Biblical version with one major exception! The

point is, on any given Friday night the roles could change. And in every locker room, that point should be addressed. Favorite or underdog...don't give up!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

Upcoming for the Red Raiders is another contest in which the Red will be heavily favored. The Chase Trojans will hope to catch South Point looking past them leading up to the Shelby contest. Not likely, this group of Raiders appears adept at maintaining a focus. And confidence is high and continues to build in this team. Good to have lofty goals and the determination to accomplish them!

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