

Game Recap

River Rumbled – Raiders Ride Second Half Shutout To Victory, 28-21

It may not have fit the mold of a classic “barn burner” but it was close enough that the cows are looking for a new home! And for the eighth consecutive year, the River Rumble is claimed by the Big Red! Since the opening of Stuart Cramer and the creation of the gridiron rivalry with South Point, the expectation has been that the River Rumble would someday live up to the smashmouth type of clashes that rivalry contests are known for. But for seven years the Red Raiders have maintained a stronghold on the bragging rights with the closest margin of victory standing at 18 points (2020). But the Storm haven’t backed down, rather they have recognized the success of the Red Raiders program and have worked to become a formidable challenger. And after two quarters of play last Friday night it appeared that the fortunes were soon to be reversed. South Point, though, had other plans. Taking to heart some spirited halftime “encouragement”, the Red Raiders came out thrashing in the second half. The result was a 28-21 victory that kept the Storm winless against the Big Red. And the river still flows Red!

Stuart Cramer won the toss and deferred the option to receive the ball in the second half. South Point accepted the ball and play began with the Raiders offense on the field. Plugging away with chunks of yardage on the ground, South Point moved methodically downfield. Using nine plays to cover 87 yards, the Red ‘O’ open the scoring on RB Tyson Riley’s six yard run. The series seemed to set the tone for what would be expected throughout the game as the ground attack was showcased. Even a thirty-nine yard completion between QB Cam Medlock and WR Frank Vickers didn’t come as a surprise as it seemed to fit perfectly into the mix of plays that advanced the Raiders opening drive. K Charles Birtwistle added the extra point and with 7:41 remaining in the first quarter, South Point had a 7-0 advantage. The lead lasted one second shy of two minutes as Stuart Cramer struck on a sixty-six yard pass to even the contest at 7-7. Unlike the Raiders opening possession, the Storm drive, while effective, was without organization. A scrambling and elusive quarterback accounted for all the needed yardage, including the long pass play. The Red ‘D’ took the punch without concern and the offense went back to work. Back to the ground, South Point managed two positive gains to face a third and two. Stuart Cramer anticipated the run that would make up the needed yardage and proved up to the task. Stopped short, the Raiders were forced to punt. Expecting the air attack, South Point prepared for the challenge. Instead a couple of handoffs and quarterback draws moved the Storm to paydirt. A designed run off the left side covered the final thirty-two yards to put Stuart Cramer up 14-7 with 1:32 remaining. South Point’s fortune did not improve on the ensuing drive that carried over into the second stanza.

South Point picked up a fresh set of downs as the second twelve began. Hard runs moved them across midfield and the drive was sustained with a fourth and short in which Medlock followed the push of C Wyatt Triplett for the positive gain. The possession seemed destined for points, until an ill-advised attempt to throw the ball out of bounds to save a sack was picked off. But as

is typically the case in a rivalry game, the unexpected is most likely. On the interception return, the ball was fumbled and South Point recovered. Credit the discipline of Offensive Linemen, Jacob Patterson, Dylan Owenby, and Ethan Thagard, to never give up on the play. Racing downfield, Patterson made the grab from behind and jarred the ball loose. Owenby and Thagard dove onto the ball to prevent further damage to the scoreboard! The Raiders were able to restart the drive but could only manage their forty-six before being forced to punt. Nevertheless, the potentially huge momentum shift had been overcome and play continued. Still the Storm saw an opportunity and were bent on taking advantage. Two plays covered thirty yards to move Stuart Cramer to midfield. Four plays more and the Storm was in the endzone. The key play in the drive was an acrobatic catch that covered forty-three yards to the South Point nine yardline. From there the Storm QB ran in to put his team up 21-7. Lightning had struck, both good and bad, for both teams in the second quarter. And with 3:19 to go before the half, it would strike again for the Red Raiders. On the ensuing kickoff, Stuart Cramer opted not to drill for the touchback, rather the short kick was taken on a bounce by RS Frank Vickers near the seventeen. Vickers hit the wedge, bounced out and spun out of tackles into the open field. The speedy return specialist raced the needed 83 yards for the touchdown. South Point had drawn to within 21-14 with the end of the half approaching. The Red 'D' forced a punt and the Red 'O' ran out the clock to send the rivals to the intermission.

It was discussed among those attending on the field, yet unconfirmed, that the outside walls of the field house seemed to rock back and forth during halftime such as would be evidence of earthquake tremors. Confirmation of the phenomenon came on the opening Storm drive of the second half. Facing a second and six, the scrambling quarterback rifled a strike that was tipped by a diving receiver...into the hands of DB Jaquis Rumph at the Stuart Cramer forty yardline. Rumph ran behind defensemen turned blockers to the seven. "I just tried to be in the right position", said Rumph when asked about the interception that set up the Raiders. He added, "We just had to capitalize off their mistakes", implying that the intention of the Red 'D' was to disrupt the Stuart Cramer rhythm and force miscues. With first and goal South Point used three plays to get Riley into the endzone. His two yard run knotted the contest at 21. Just under two minutes had elapsed in the third quarter and the rivals were back even in the slugfest. South Point forced a three and out on the ensuing Storm possession and the Red offense was again in business. A shanked punt placed the ball at the Storm thirty-three. Riley again took the majority of the handoffs but it was the offensive line that were the workhorses of the drive. Once again a two yard run put points on the board and gave South Point their second lead of the game at 28-21. Then from the 6:28 point of the third quarter the defenses took over. Stuart Cramer put their fortunes on the legs and arm of their athletic quarterback, but the Red 'D' was equal to the task. Chased in the backfield by DL Aiden Ramirez, the passer scrambled to keep the drive alive. But Ramirez forced the issue, running the Cramer captain into the sure tackle of DL teammate Josh Crowder. Ramirez and his defensive cohorts turned up their play in the second half with the defensive lineman himself accounting for several quarterback hurries, sacks, and tackles for loss. Asked about the effort of the defense in the second half, Ramirez noted, "It's just speed and

technique.” He added, “We can still get better”, suggesting that the team recognized how the level of their play had to be raised as the game progressed. That effort forced punts to end the third and set the fourth up for an exciting finish.

The final twelve minutes mirrored a couple of heavyweights throwing whatever was left in the tank in hopes that a knockout punch would land. The Storm offense was forced to open up and take even more chances downfield. And the Red Raiders offense sought only to play their brand of ground attack ball control. Both defenses met the challenges. On the first play from scrimmage in the fourth quarter, DL Shane Wilson took an outside line around the left guard and on the quarterbacks blindside. The rush forced a desperation heave that was picked off by Rumph. It was Rumph’s second of the game with both coming in the second half and gave South Point the ball at their forty-nine. The Red ‘O’ ground out yardage on a thirteen-play drive that took 7:23 off the clock. Unfortunately, that thirteenth play of the drive resulted in a fumble recovered by Stuart Cramer at their seven. The Storm took the field for a drive that they needed to result in points in the closing minutes. The Raiders continued to bring pressure and force scrambles and rushed throws. On a 2nd and 5 from the Cramer thirty-nine, DL Xarique Culbreath shot a gap and applied pressure. The hurried throw sailed and was picked off by DB Will Ross. With possession in Storm territory, South Point ran the ball and the final 2:54 off the clock to secure the victory!

The meeting between rivals South Point and Stuart Cramer, now known as the “River Rumble” has been dominated by the Red Raiders in the previous seven years of its existence. Each year the expectation is that a barn burner will ensue once the coin is tossed. The eighth meeting came closer than any other in the series to reaching that status. In the end, a second half shutout by a stout Red Raiders defense and a solid ground attack by the South Point offense kept fans on the edge of their seats. Perhaps more important to RaiderNation, the effort kept the Red Raiders undefeated in the series. Miscues were costly, and the coach has promised a week of “work” to get things straightened out. But the Big Red never gave in and battled through to victory. And the river still flows RED!

Go Get ‘Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

Next week the Red Raiders travel to Gastonia for a matchup with Hunter Huss. The Huskies have yet to get into the win column having dropped two contests to Hickory Ridge and Kings Mountain. South Point cannot afford to take Huss lightly. The Huskies will come in hungry for a win and determined to protect the home turf.