

Game Recap

Mission Accomplished! – Red Raiders Shutdown Shelby, 28-16

While the story lines of the game may not include a score on the last play to win a championship, or even a defensive stop to vault a team into the playoffs, the circumstances of the week leading up to the matchup with Shelby were a true testament to the strength and resolve of South Point Football. Changes to the team dynamic, facing the most formidable opponent over the past 50 years, on the road with fading playoff hopes, and forced to make changes at key positions were certainly reasons enough to lower expectations for the Raiders. Play hard, give a good account of yourselves, and the outcome will be adequate. Such would have been acceptable as far as encouraging words addressed to South Point going in to the game against Shelby. But to this group of Red Raiders, the only acceptable outcome would be a dominating performance that led to a convincing victory over a long-time rival. Mission Accomplished! The true character of a winner was on display as the Big Red never gave in to the idea that taking down the Golden Lions was impossible. Rather this team adopted the popular sports notion that “if you think you can, you can; and if you think you can’t, you’re right.” South Point turned the distractions of the week into motivation and the result was a hard-earned and well-deserved victory. In this final Southwestern 2A Conference meeting, South Point opened the scoring and sufficiently dominated Shelby throughout, to gain a monumental 28-16 victory!

South Point gained the first possession by virtue of a deferred option by Shelby. The decision to allow the Golden Lions defense to set the tone was not a good one for Shelby. The Red ‘O’ started the initial drive at their 35 yardline and set out on a ground-pounding effort that required control of the line of scrimmage. The O-line did not disappoint. Chipping away with positive gains, the Raiders moved steadily into Golden Lions territory. Along with the yardage, the Big Red also chipped away at the game clock. From six yards out, QB Will Rhinehart broke through for the game’s first score. K Carson Smith added the extra point and South Point had the early 7-0 advantage on a drive of 7:40. Smith would then drill his kickoff through the endzone for the touchback forcing the Golden Lions to begin their first drive from their 20 yardline. Although Shelby had some marginal success moving the ball, the Red ‘D’ was not overmatched. And when LB Omari Hunt intercepted a Golden Lions pass to halt the drive, the Red ‘O’ was eager to maintain the momentum. Driving from their 30 yardline, the Raiders carried the possession into Shelby territory and into the second quarter.

Opening the second stanza at the opponent’s 21 yardline, South Point managed a couple of yards to the nineteen. From there, speedy RB Tyson Riley outran all defenders to the goalline for another South Point touchdown. Riley figured prominently in the offense as he and Hunt were pressed into service at the fullback and wingback positions. The will and determination of the team was clearly reflected in their efforts as Riley saw a tremendous uptick in his offensive touches and Hunt played an outstanding game on both sides of the ball. Asked about the significance of the game and his part in it, Riley was quick to recognize his teammates, “It was

amazing, working with these (guys) in practice every day, we were ready”, he said. The running back continued by acknowledging his offensive teammates. “I’ve got to praise our O-line and my fellow wingbacks, Cam (Medlock) and Omari (Hunt), everybody was out there blocking, protecting our backers; it was just amazing.” The score put the Raiders ahead, 14-0, with 11:15 to go before the half. The Red ‘D’ forced a Golden Lions punt on the next possession and South Point embarked on another drive for points. The positive gains were halted though and a field goal attempt was wide left, holding the advantage at 14 for the Raiders. Shelby fared no better on their next possession as the Red ‘D’ recovered a fumble to stop the Golden Lions advance. South Point then ran out the remainder of the clock to send the teams to the intermission with the Raiders holding to the lead.

Shelby went to the air for quick strikes to open the third quarter of play. A thirty-four yard touchdown pass and 2-point conversion cut the South Point lead to six at 14-8. And when the Raiders were forced to punt on their next possession, the momentum swing caused an uneasy stir among the Red faithful. But this team of Red Raiders has no quit in them! Standing firm, the Red ‘D’ gained a turnover on downs to protect the lead. Once again South Point would possess the ball as the clock wound down to send the teams to the final 12:00 of regulation.

The drive to begin the fourth quarter ended with a turnover on downs and the Golden Lions were poised to finally capture the lead on their first possession of the quarter. But the Red ‘D’ continued to bring the pressure! A fumble at the Shelby forty-five was recovered by the Raiders and the Red ‘O’ took over. Eating clock and yardage, South Point drove to the Golden Lions 1 yardline. Riley burst through for his second touchdown of the game and the 2-point conversion was good to put South Point up 22-8 with 4:52 to go. Desperation set in for the Golden Lions and a 49 yard bomb was the answer to prayers that netted 8 more for Shelby. With 3:39 to go, the South Point advantage had been cut to 22-16. On the ensuing drive, the Big Red found themselves in a hole, facing a third and nine from their 23 yardline. A pitch to Hunt around the left side was the call and the Shelby defense swarmed. Hunt broke out of the tackles and ran to daylight, first picking up the first down and then making a cut for more. Seventy-seven yards later the South Point lead grew to 28-16 with 3:18 to go! Asked about the play, that for all intent and purpose sealed the deal for the Raiders, Hunt expressed the team’s plan going into the contest. “We just knew we had to move the ball on them to compete”, said Hunt. And when pressed to further describe the breakout run, Hunt admitted, “It was great to get a big play in a big game.” He added that once he broke the first tackle and saw daylight, all he could think of was how he needed to score the touchdown. The statement was made - emphatically! The Golden Lions again tried to mount a quick strike charge. But when DB Will Ross drew a bead on a Shelby pass downfield all he had to do was make the catch and help seal the victory. “We had talked about, the whole game, not letting anybody get behind (us), so it kind of felt like this could be the one to end the game”, said Ross. His interception gave the Raiders the ball in Shelby territory and allowed South point to take a knee and the win! Mission Accomplished!

Overcoming the obstacles of the week leading up to the Shelby game, coupled with playing a longtime nemesis on their home turf, would give any team reason to be satisfied with just a good effort. But there is no quit in this group of Red Raiders and the only outcome they would accept was a flat out dominating victory! Mission Accomplished!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

South Point closes out the shortened regular season next week as they host the Chase Trojans. Chase eked out a 50-49 win against R-S Central and comes in boasting an identical conference and overall record as the Red Raiders. The stage is set for a hard fought battle. The time for a letdown is – well – Never! Go Big Red!