

South Point opens playoffs with 28-7 win

By David Snyder
Special to The Gazette

Hitting the road in an opening playoff game may have felt a little out of place for South Point High, but for the seventh straight year, the Red Raiders will advance to the second round.

Naseem Jones carried the ball 25 times for 191 yards including two touchdowns and Ray Grier had a touchdown catch plus two interceptions on defense to lead the way in a 28-7 win over Mount Pleasant, champions of the Rocky River 2A conference who had won four straight.

After two three and outs to open the game, Coach Adam Hodge wasn't overly concerned with the slow start "we just have to stay after it, South Point will take what they give us. We had to figure out a little more about their defense. The rain this week didn't affect us. We practiced in the gym just like they did"

On the third possession, the Red Raider offense got going. Starting from their own eight-yard line, quarterback Keaton Hale engineered an eleven play drive that he'd finish with a 35-yard touchdown run to break the seal and put South Point up 7-0 with 11:20 to go in the second quarter.

It took Mount Pleasant eight plays to respond and tie the game at seven after bruising running back Landon Honeycutt carried it in from three yards out. But South Point would immediately retake the lead on a Jones 54-yard touchdown run to make it 14-7 lead to the half.

The second half was all about Jones pounding out run after run. His 38 yard touchdown carry increased

the lead to 21-7 midway through the third and just when Mount Pleasant forced a third a long, Hale found Grier on a slant over the middle that he took to the house from 27 yards out to make it a 28-7 lead late in the third, which would eventually be the final score.

The Tigers only had the ball three times in the second half. They punted on their first possession and Ray Grier would end their other two with picks. The second one with 11 minutes to go in the game would lead to a 16 play, fourth quarter, clock-killing drive that would end inside the 10-yard line with a kneel down.

Coach Hodge was pumped about the way his team finished. "That was awesome, to move the ball down field without turnovers," he said "It's great to have a solid offense that can do that"

Turning point

Facing a fourth and 10 and trailing 14-7 late in the first half and just inside the red zone, Tiger QB Chance Daquila had a man break open down the sideline for the potential tying touchdown. Red Raider defensive back Tyler Kyle arrived just in time to break it up and force the turnover on downs.

Of note

About 350 of their fans made the 45-mile trip from Belmont. It was a clean game with only five penalties between the two teams.

What's next

South Point will travel to Lenoir to take on unbeaten and defending state champion Hibernian.

South Point 28, Mount

Pleasant 7

First Quarter
None
Second Quarter
SP Keaton Hale 35 run (Cade Ratliff
kick)11:20
MP Landon Honeycutt 3 run (Owen
Prifti kick) 7:39
SP Naseem Jones 54 run (Ratliff
kick) 7:10
Third Quarter
SP Jones 38 run (Ratliff kick) 7:19
SP Ray Grier 27 pass from Hale (Ratliff
kick) 2:44
Fourth Quarter
None

MP - SP
7 First downs 16
25-135 Rushes-yards 49-318
26 Passing yards 38
161 Total yards 356
4-9-2 Comp-att-int 3-7-1
0-0 Fumbles-lost 2-0

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Individual Statistics

Mount Pleasant
Rushing - Kade Leonard 6-30, Chance Daquila 4-12, Landon Honeycutt 11-81-1, Noah Berryman 4-12
Passing - Chance Daquila 4-9-2 26
Receiving- Bryson Leonard 1-3, Fisher Furr 2-21, Kade Leonard 1-minus 3, Cade McDonald 1-5

South Point
Rushing - Ray Grier 1-minus 4, Naseem Jones 25-191-2, Keaton Hale 13-86-1, Caleb Gibson 2-3, Jamani Leeper 3-24, Hunter Hogue 4-12, Tre Glenn 1-6
Passing - Keaton Hale 3-7-1 38 (1 TD)
Receiving - Grier 3-38-1