

Game Recap

Raiders Outrun Lions, Slam Ambassador Christian 48-18

The regular season is done. The slate is wiped clean. Nothing that happened in the past matters; it's all ancient history. Well, maybe recent history, but history, nonetheless. The playoffs have arrived! What matters now is the present. Win and advance. Advance and realize a goal that was set in the late evening of November 22, 2024. South Point's last playoff exit, like any, was an excruciating end to yet another outstanding football campaign. But the pride of the Big Red does not dwell on the past, and the determination to inflict pain rather than suffer it runs deep in the Red Raiders tradition! South Point's final tune-up heading into the post season came on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University's Eddie C. McGirt field last Friday night. The host Ambassador Christian Lions stood between the Raiders and an eye to the second season. The Big Red did not look past the upstart private school. Rather they manhandled the Lions 48-18 to head into the playoffs on a powerful note. Former Pittsburgh Steelers Super Bowl (2006) champion running back Jerome Bettis once commented on the different expectations between the regular season and the playoffs. The "Bus" explained, "You know, you can be perfect for a game or so, but when you get in the playoffs, you have to be perfect for every game." South Point may still be in search of an elusive "perfect game." But after the beatdown of Ambassador Christian, the Raiders have proven a will to improve and work hard on every play. The nature of the post season demands focus. The season of every team in the playoffs will end. Every team will lose their last game...except for one! The challenge now becomes to do what it takes to be that one. The Big Red is ready!

South Point won the toss and deferred their option, choosing to give Ambassador Christian the game's initial possession. The speedy and pass-happy Lions made quick work getting on the board. A three-play drive ending with a 44-yard touchdown pass caused the Raiders to reassess their focus. The early 6-0 deficit was not yet a concern. The Red 'O' made sure of that on their first drive. QB Patrick Blee and FB Kaveaun Pless carved up the Lions' defense, pounding their way to the Ambassador Christian 20-yardline. From there, WB Jesse Ledford took a pitch around the right side and dove into the endzone to tie the score. K Wilson London's PAT was true, and the Raiders gained the 7-6 advantage with 5:23 remaining in the opening quarter. The Red 'D' then took over and sustained the momentum. LB Wade Jefferies helped shut the door on the Lions' drive with a tackle for loss on second down. On the ensuing possession, Pless and Blee were once again the workhorses. The Raiders drove inside the Lions 1-yardline. Blee punched in to advance the lead to 14-6 with 10 seconds to go in the stanza. Ambassador Christian carried the next possession into the second quarter.

With the ball to begin play in the second, the Lions again went to the air for points. On second down and ten, DB Cayden Rumph picked off a Lions' pass and returned it 39 yards for the score. South Point's lead grew to 21-6 with 11:08 remaining in the quarter. The Red 'D' immediately forced an Ambassador Christian punt on the next drive to give the offense another crack at points. From the South Point 33-yardline, the Raiders again leaned on Pless to do the yeoman's work, driving the ball to the Lions 8-yardline. For his effort, the fullback was awarded another carry with which he covered the remaining yardage for six more points. Pless finished the game with 217 yards on 16 carries...all in the first half! Asked about the impressive showing, Pless credited his offensive line. "Thanks to my O-line, whenever I got to the line there was the hole, I could break off the tackle and, gone," said the fullback. He also had no shortage of confidence when asked about the limits of this Red Raiders squad. "We just have to build off of this and keep our foot on the gas. Then nothing can hold us back," he said. The South Point advantage grew to 28-6 as time wound down before the half. Ambassador Christian could mount no threat against the Raiders defense. On their next drive the Lions managed to cross midfield but could advance no further. A fourth and nine pass from the South Point 44-yardline whistled deep downfield where DB Tucker McWhirter made a diving interception. Initially the catch may have appeared ill-advised given the change in field position. Rather than taking over on downs at the Raiders' 44-yardline, McWhirter's pick-off was marked at the South Point one. Had his momentum carried him into the endzone, the result could have been a touchback to at least move the ball to the twenty. But the important thing was the drive was halted, and the Red 'O' had another shot to highlight their power. On first down, Pless broke free to the Lions' 31-yardline for a pickup of 68 yards! The second downplay was equally impactful as Blee hit an open SE Walker Spargo who raced untouched to the endzone. For the record, the two plays covered 99 yards and milked a scant 36 seconds off the clock. The 34-6 blowout had officially taken shape! Just under two minutes remained when the Lions' offense took to the field seeking a measure of respect. The Red 'D' was stingy! And the Red 'O' was greedy! Another Ambassador Christian punt was forced, and the Lions lost any measure of control they had on their emotions. A personal foul kick-catch interference penalty was followed by a dead ball unsportsmanlike conduct call against the Lions. The Raiders took over at the Ambassador Christian 23-yardline. The team that took two plays to score from 99 yards out matched the effort from 23 yards. Aided by a Pless run and another unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, South Point set up at the 4-yard line with under a minute to go. A pitch to Ledford was all that was needed as he raced around the end for the score. The Raiders carried a 41-6 lead into the intermission.

Substitutions were in order to begin the third quarter. The clock went live, and Raiders were held on downs with the first possession of the second half. The Lions managed a score on a 9-yard touchdown pass to put another notch on the scoreboard. The advantage stood at 41-12

with the two possessions totaling the quarter. South Point carried their next possession into the final stanza.

QB Rumph and FB Seifer Trottier became the ball carriers of record. The two combined to carry South Point to the Ambassador Christian 2-yardline. From there, Trottier bulled through for six points and advanced the Raiders advantage to 48-12 with 6:49 remaining in regulation. The game drew to its merciful close with another McWhirter interception, a South Point fumble, and a Lions' score as time expired. The final tune-up for the playoffs had reached its final. The Raiders slammed Ambassador Christian, 48-18, to close the regular season.

"Perfect" football now becomes the expectation. South Point now turns their attention to winning every game left in the season. Only one team will win their final game. No team will work harder for the honor!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

As of this writing, South Point appears to have achieved a first-round bye as one of the top eight teams in the west bracket of the NCHSAA playoffs. More to come on seeding, schedule, and opponent. Time to go to work! Go Big Red!