

## **Red Raiders Win Thriller - Boot Burns In OT, 45-42**

September 11, 2011

"Rising to the challenge" is one of many phrases used to describe South Point football over the years. The character of Red Raiders' teams has never lacked for determination and the reputation has been built and passed on from generations. The "brand" is referred to as "Red Raider Football" and Coach Mickey Lineberger expressed as much to the team on Friday night. Huddled at midfield of Lineberger Stadium, after an amazing victory over the third ranked and highly touted Burns Bulldogs, the coach gazed into the eyes of his players and reminded each that "This is how we play 'Red Raider' football!" South Point built leads on more than one occasion throughout the contest, only to have the high-powered Bulldog offense fight back to tie the score late in regulation. It was at that point that 'Red Raider Football' took final charge! South Point held Burns to two yards on three plays in the first overtime possession and forced a field goal attempt that was missed. With loads of confidence in the team and without hesitation, the coaching staff immediately sent the Red Raider field goal unit onto the field. Jordan Kagen made the perfect snap, Patrick Horne had the perfect hold, and Dayton Rogers...

For the second time this season, South Point faced an opponent with a highly regarded offense; one with an impressively athletic quarterback. Last season, the Burns squad (many returnees) thumped the Red Raiders by a 42-14 margin and the Bulldogs were eager to follow up on that success by surprising South Point at home. But in the first half, the Red Raiders were ready and up to the challenge. South Point deferred the option, electing to start on defense. The Bulldogs indicated their gameplan with the first possession. A run that gained four yards, two incomplete passes, and some costly penalties caused Burns to give the ball to the Red Raiders early in the contest. Ramon Costner took the Bulldog punt into Burns territory and a facemask penalty advanced the ball further, to the Bulldog thirteen yard line. Taking advantage of the field position, Troy Leeper broke through the line for the game's initial score and a 7-0 South Point lead. The Red Raiders continued to make their own breaks on the ensuing kickoff by recovering a loose ball at the Burns twenty-four. The fumble recovery set up the Red offense at 8:19 of the first quarter. Devan Robbins added to the South Point advantage, rushing in from 8 yards out to make the score 14-0 with 6:53 remaining. After the scoring drive, Dayton Rogers kickoff sailed into the endzone for a touchback. The kick kept the ball out of the hands of Burns' speedy return specialists, but put it into the capable hands of the high powered offense. The Bulldogs' offense got in gear as consecutive pass completions helped Burns to march downfield for a touchdown. The pass completions were made possible by a scrambling quarterback, giving receivers time to get open. Additionally, the Bulldogs converted on third and long situations, something they were able to accomplish as the game progressed (provided there was enough field to work with). The Red Raiders answered the Burns score, pushing the lead back to fourteen at 21-7. On first down from the Bulldog 47 yard line, Troy Leeper found a seam and motored to the endzone. In

the final two minutes, South Point would slow the Burns attack with big hits by Josh Allman and pass deflections (almost interceptions) by Ramon Costner. But slowing the attack did not mean stopping the attack. The quarter ended with the Bulldogs at the South Point twenty-four.

It took under a minute of the second quarter for the Bulldogs to again draw within a touchdown of the Red Raiders. By this time, RaiderNation recognized that no lead was safe and this would be a battle to the end! The scoreboard read 21-14 in South Point's favor with the Red Raiders driving to stay ahead. On the drive, South Point converted a fourth and short for a first down and appeared to sustain the momentum they had established on offense. A fumble at the Burns nine yard line erased the chance and the Bulldogs were back on the field with a chance to even the score. After allowing a couple of first downs, the Red Raiders defense dug in and forced a Bulldog punt with 1:28 to go before halftime. South Point's drive began at their own eight yard line and the Red Raiders worked the clock and the field perfectly. A mix of passes and runs pushed the ball into Burns territory where a pass interference call on the Bulldogs would put South Point at the seventeen yard line with 17 seconds remaining. The field position and time were all Leeper needed to once again pad the Red Raider lead. His burst ended the first half scoring and sent the teams into the locker room with South Point holding a 28-14 advantage.

Each teams' offensive prowess was on display in the third quarter. The Red Raiders took the opening kickoff of the second half and with power running behind a solid offensive line push, South Point scored their fifth touchdown of the game. Leeper's fourth touchdown, of his total five, gave the Red Raiders what was expected to be an insurmountable lead. The drive ate nearly half of the third quarter clock (5:58) and gave South Point a 21 point lead at 35-14. But the Bulldogs were not done and neither had they reached "panic mode." In just over a minute and a half, Burns had closed the gap again to 35-21. A Costner kick return to the South Point forty-five gave the Red Raiders good field position to answer. South Point again began to pound away, but a fumble (recovered by the Red Raiders) lost eight yards and dug a hole for the Red offense. The Red Raiders chipped away to the Burns thirty-five and faced a fourth and four. Electing to keep the drive alive, Horne pitched to a determined Tyler Bray who raced for the new set of downs and continued to break tackles to the Burns three yard line. Bray's run reignited the Raider faithful on the sidelines and in the stands. The impressive scamper led to South Point's last touchdown, a 1 yard Leeper plunge. The Red Raiders had a three touchdown lead and 12 minutes to protect it for their biggest win of the season thus far. Again, though trailing 42-21, the Bulldogs refused to cooperate and go quietly.

The fourth quarter turned out to be all Burns as the Bulldogs, now in desperation, found some success and forced the Red Raiders into an aggressively defensive mode rather than an attacking offensive approach. Burns would take advantage of some unpopular penalties against South Point and cover an onside kick such that before the end of regulation, their three touchdowns would bring the teams even. Perhaps the rankings of both teams suggested that the outcome would be as reflected on the field and on the scoreboard. But South Point had played with so much control that an overtime session seemed unlikely. Burns had apparently reached their "panic mode" and the Red Raiders countered. Jordan Kagen, in the second half and especially in the final quarter, had stepped up and led the charge that would keep South

Point from losing. The starting center and long snapper made his presence known on special teams with monstrous hits on kickoffs. He was also sent in to assist on defense. Asked about the plan to let him play on the defensive side of the ball, Kagen admitted that he was called upon "only in emergency situations." Credit the Red Raiders coaching staff for recognizing the urgency of the circumstances. Kagen and his teammates turned it up a notch in regulation's waning moments, forcing a Bulldog punt to preserve the tie and an opportunity in overtime.

South Point won the game's second toss and again elected to send their defense onto the field first. The Red Raiders inspired 'D' held the Bulldogs to two yards and a field goal attempt. Burns must have been shaken by the spirit and renewed energy of the South Point defense. The Red Raiders' push rushed the Bulldog kicker, forcing his attempt to tail left of its mark giving South Point the chance they needed. The ball was then placed at the same ten yard line for the South Point overtime possession. The Red Raider field goal unit took the field on first down! Jordan Kagen made the perfect snap, Patrick Horne had the perfect hold, and Dayton Rogers booted the perfect kick that kept South Point a perfect 4-0 on the season! Rogers may have admitted later to some nervousness given the situation but not for a lack of confidence in his teammates. "I knew my line was going to hold that defense back and I was just going to get a perfect snap, hold and kick," said Rogers, adding that it was his biggest three points of this season so far.

A highly anticipated matchup went the way of the Red Raiders Friday night. A contest that matched two of the top 3A teams in the state became a battle to the end. In true "Red Raider Football" fashion, South Point rose to the challenge to knock off a formidable opponent. The Red Raiders "booted" Burns back to Lawndale, winning in overtime, 45-42, against the Bulldogs!

Next week South Point begins Big South 3A Conference play as the Kings Mountain Mountaineers visit Lineberger Stadium. Let's make quick work of 'em, Red!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

### **Notable Facts and Thoughts**

Leeper continues to lead an outstanding rushing attack for the Red Raiders. On 29 carries, the powerful running back averaged just over eight yards per carry!

Dayton Rogers explained that the winning kick was just what the team practices. "I just needed to hit my lines," said the game-winning kicker.