

## Game Recap

“Thursday Thrashing...South Point Blanks Chase, 49-0”

BELMONT – South Point took another step on the climb to a Southwestern 2A Conference championship. The Red Raiders thrashed the Chase Trojans in a Thursday night matchup that had been rescheduled to account for inclement weather expected on Friday. The “slightly” abbreviated week of preparation posed no problem for South Point. The Raiders, in quick order, took care of business against the Trojans. The focus now shifts to rival Shelby and a matchup between conference unbeaten teams with an outright claim to the conference title up for grabs. South Point has been especially dominant in the two contests leading up to the regular season finale. The Red Raiders have surrendered a scant 6 points in those games, albeit against decidedly weaker opponents. Yet within the expectation to easily meet those challenges, South Point managed to maintain the common focus they’ve held throughout the season, continuous improvement through hard work. Well-known former Green Bay Packers Head Coach, the late Vince Lombardi once said, “The man on top of the mountain didn’t fall there.” The implication should be that no success in the season is simply given to a team, rather all accolades are earned, and championships won through hard work. To this point the Red Raiders have proven capable and now is the time to take the next step.

In the final tune-up ahead of the Shelby game, Chase was certainly suited to play the role of spoiler in South Point’s conference run. The Trojans won the toss...and little else! A scoring chance on their opening drive gave hope to Chase and had the Red ‘D’ on their heels early. But DB Devon King ended the threat with a blocked field goal attempt to turn the Trojans back. The Raiders took over at the South Point 19 yardline and the onslaught began from there. Executing the triple option with mixes of dives, pitches, and keepers, with a pass thrown in for balance, the Red ‘O’ drove to the Chase three. From there FB Naseem Jones burst through for the opening score. K Cade Ratliff drilled the PAT and South Point had the 7-0 lead. On the ensuing possession, the Trojans picked up positive yardage by moving from their 20 yardline to the forty-two. There, facing a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8, Chase ran a handoff up the middle. DL Aryn Moore and DL Alec Moore closed the hole and LB Omari Hunt and LB Josh Hicks converged for the tackle. Before the play ended, Hicks stripped the ball and gave his offense another chance for points. Taking over at the Trojans’ forty-six, the Raiders drove to the Chase twelve. The ground attacks for both teams chewed up the first quarter clock and so South Point carried the possession into the second stanza.

With 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 at the Chase twelve, the Raiders quickly sought to add to the lead early in the new quarter. Two plays, a three yard loss and a fifteen yard gain netted the points. RB Caleb Gibson took a pitch from QB Keaton Hale and the speedy back cut around the left side to race untouched to the endzone. The South Point advantage grew to 14-0 and the Big Red showed no intention to let up. The clock read 11:48, giving Chase ample time to get back into the game. The Trojans opted for an air attack, but South Point’s pressure and coverage eliminated the threat. Chase was forced to punt, and the Raiders began their third drive from the South Point thirty-two. Gibson, once again, figured into the drive, picking up a chunk of yardage to move the Raiders across midfield. From the Trojans’ forty-six, Hale went to the air for a big strike.

SE Ray Grier used his frame and body positioning to grab a pass near the Chase fifteen. Grier then fended off the tackler with a stiff arm while pushing toward the goalline. The touchdown advanced the lead to 21-0 with 8:11 to go before the half. The Trojans had no answer. The Red 'D' sustained the pressure and forced the first Chase punt. The ball was downed at the South Point forty-three where the Raiders took over. A holding penalty stalled the drive but did not stop the momentum. The Raiders recovered the yards lost to the penalty and drove to the Chase one yardline. From there, Hale took advantage of a push from his offensive line and put six more on the board. The 28-0 lead was accomplished with outstanding line play. The Raiders controlled the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball. Asked how this was possible and how the team expected to maintain the momentum, OL Larry Dowdy explained that it all starts with good practices that include challenges from the coaches. "Coach has been challenging us to have the best week of practice we can possibly have", said Dowdy, adding, "We continue to get better." The offensive lineman alluded to the common goal of the team and expressed that the team understands the work necessary to reach their pinnacle of success. His words were also proven on the defensive side. On their next possession, Chase managed one yard in three plays and were forced to punt from their endzone following a penalty. Virtually assured of great field position, the ball was returned to the Trojans' twenty-five for South Point's 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 with 3:19 remaining. The Raiders managed the clock while seeking to put points on the board before the intermission. Snapping the ball deep into the play clock, the Red 'O' drove once again to the Trojans' one yardline. At that point, Jones lowered his shoulders and plowed in for the score. Ratliff notched his fifth consecutive extra point for the 35-0 advantage. The teams went to the half with South Point in control and set to receive the initial second half kick.

With the ball to begin the third quarter, the Raiders started a drive from the South Point thirty-three. The offense moved quickly. Gibson picked up a chunk of yardage, carrying the ball from the Raiders' forty-eight to the Chase twenty-five. Hale had a lane on the first down play but was upended at the twenty-one. On the next play, another pitch to Gibson resulted in a 21-yard run for the touchdown. South Point's lead grew to 42-0 prompting the clock to run continuously from the 10:02 mark in the third. Chase continued to try to battle but were no match for the Raiders. Backups were inserted for South Point and the beat continued. Pinned deep by the Raiders' kickoff, the Trojans began at their six yardline. The Raiders defense permitted three plays and four yards, forcing yet another Chase punt. Unable to flip the field, the Trojans punt was returned to the Chase thirty. Jamani Leeper took over under center and he was anchored in the backfield by FB Hunter Hogue. The tandem split carries, driving to the five yardline. From there, Leeper punched in for the score that accounted for the final 49-0. Time expired in the third stanza and both teams traded punts in the fourth to close out the contest.

South Point remains undefeated in conference play with a hard-charging offense and a hard-hitting defense. DB Devon King spoke to the ability of the defense to shutout the Trojans after having given up a mere six points to R-S Central a week prior. "It starts with practice", said King, adding, "We just need to work hard." The comments mirror the attitude of the Red Raiders on each side of the ball and in every phase of the game. The Shelby Golden Lions remain, and the winner of that contest solely claims the Southwestern 2A Conference title heading in to the playoffs. Adopting Coach Lombardi's truth that the those on top didn't "fall

there”, South Point will continue to give every effort to achieve their goal. Hard work is what it takes. And hard work is not foreign to these Red Raiders. Shelby will see that first hand!

Go Get ‘Em, Red!

### **Notable Facts and Thoughts**

Go to work!

Jamey Andrews