
VARSITY REPORT

by Jamey Andrews

“TEAM’ of Red Raiders Halt Streaking Chargers...South Point Downs Crest, 27-12”

The 2016 high school football season kicked off Friday night with roughly 400 teams across the state of North Carolina eager to take the first step on a long journey to a championship. Two of those met on the field of Lineberger Stadium in Belmont. One, a defending state champion, was seeking to extend a 32 game win streak with their last loss coming December 14, 2013 in a state final. The other, a defending Western Regional Champion, who fell three times to the worthy opponent during the stretch, was simply seeking to establish themselves once again as a team of championship caliber. Only one would realize their first game goal and when the final whistle blew it was South Point who sent a powerful message to future opponents. The Red Raiders played outstanding football in every phase of the game and came away with the 27-12 victory over the Chargers. To choose a “player of the game” one would need to highlight the entire roster! South Point’s team effort in game one set a high mark for future success.

Crest won the toss and deferred the option giving South Point the first possession of the new season. The Raiders fought hard out of the gate but mustered little in the early going. In fact, the teams traded turnovers in their first possessions as each grabbed third down pass interceptions. The miscue would be the Raiders only turnover while the Red would force two more from the Chargers. With their second drive, South Point drove 70 yards in 15 plays to notch the games first points on Quarterback Scottie Lee’s 4 yd keeper. Kicker Thomas Lempereur drilled the PAT and the Red Raiders grabbed the early 7-0 lead. The drive was vintage South Point as the Red Raiders pounded out the yardage behind a determined O-line. Fullback Jake Alexander, and Wingbacks Ty Tinker and Mario Brandon joined Lee in moving the ball downfield. On the scoring drive, Center Ethan Jackson anchored the offensive line with Guards James Granson and Victor Hernandez. Tackles and Ends Sean Burns, Riley Nichols, Larry Dowdy, J.R. Scipio, and Zach Scandrett contributed to the impressive drive. On the ensuing kickoff, South Point initiated a strategy that would, throughout the game, prove valuable. High, short kicks would force fair catches or were quickly covered by the kicking team. The tactic essentially eliminated one phase of Crest’s quick strike ability.

With the ball resting at the Chargers 34, the Red ‘D’ dug in. Three plays gained four yards and Crest was forced to punt. Contributing to the solid defensive stand were Defensive Linemen and Ends, Payton Graham, Phillip Davis, Matthew Robinson, Nolan Cochran, and Josh Bogen. Linebackers, Corners and Safeties were Nathan Hamilton, Nick Muse, Tanner Canterbury, Nick Farmer, Max Mead, Nathan Silver, and Brandon. Hamilton blocked the Chargers punt and the Red ‘O’ was back on the field at the Crest 24 yardline. A quick three play drive ended with a Lee to Muse 22 yard touchdown pass to advance the advantage. The Red Raiders carried the 14-0 lead into the second quarter.

The Chargers managed to move across midfield early in the quarter but the Raiders swarmed the backfield on a first down play forcing an errant pitch. Cochran recovered the ball at the 50 yardline and the South Point offense took the field. Controlling the ball, the Raiders used

13 plays to drive to the Crest 13 yardline. A questionable spot on a third down play forced the Raiders to attempt a field goal. Lempereur drilled the 30 yarder for a 17-0 South Point lead with 4:44 remaining in the half. The teams would then trade punts with the Raiders forcing two Chargers' three and out possessions. With 1:29 to go, South Point perfectly managed the field and the clock, driving to the Crest 8 yardline saving four seconds on the clock. Another Lempereur field goal of 25 yards gave the Red Raiders a 20-0 halftime lead. The seventh longest win streak in the nation was but one half away from being history!

With the ball to begin the third quarter, Crest found some rhythm and quickly struck for six. South Point recovered and though the Red could muster little on their first possession of the second half, they shutdown the Chargers for the remainder of the third. The quick frame saw both teams possess the ball twice. South Point's second possession of the quarter would carry over into the final stanza.

The Raiders would begin the fourth facing a 2nd and six from the Crest thirty-two. More gaping holes and more hard running netted South Point another touchdown on an Alexander one yard dive. The Red was in command at 27-6 and determined to keep the intensity level up through to the final whistle! A Max Mead interception in the endzone halted a Crest drive and sent the Chargers into desperation mode. Crest would muster a touchdown as time wound down but the damage had been done. The impressive total TEAM effort put forth by the Red Raiders gained South Point the 27-12 victory and will no doubt serve as a confidence boost as the season continues.

The high school football season kicked off last Friday night and with it the hopes of hundreds of teams vying for conference and state titles. At Lineberger Stadium, one streak ended and one team learned what it takes to win. South Point put together a complete game with contributions from players up and down the roster and by doing so sent a message to all opponents that this team is made up of winners. Next Raider Up!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

That South Point could, and would, come together as a team to put forth an outstanding effort for an efficient win, comes as no surprise. But given the questions about how this team would respond to the high level of talent and experience lost from last year's squad, the domination of the Chargers is an encouraging "eye-opener"! Credit the young men for stepping up and proving themselves.

The road gets no easier for the Red Raiders as the non-conference schedule continues. The Lincolnton Wolves come to town Next Friday and will be looking to prove that South Point's effort in the Crest contest was a fluke. The Red is ready to make another statement!

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