

## Game Recap

“Black Friday Bruisin’ ...Red Raiders Shutout Warriors, 42-0”

As strange as it may sound, South Point overcame two opponents while facing their rival East Gaston Warriors on Black Friday. After blowout victories at Cramer (33-7) and Ashbrook (46-14), it would have been easy for the Red Raiders to swagger into Arrowhead Stadium with swollen egos and an “off-the-chart” level of confidence. South Point was, after all, a decidedly heavy favorite to extend the eleven-game win streak over the Warriors. During that run, the average margin of victory was a whopping 40 points per game! And for the season, the Raiders offense has been productive and the defense stingy so there was every reason to believe that this game was over even before the opening whistle. But that would run counter to the tradition of South Point Red Raiders football. With two close losses in seven games and after having overcome adversities along the way, this season’s group of Red Raiders understand the importance of not underestimating an opponent nor overestimating their own abilities. South Point grabbed early control against East Gaston and never let up in their pursuit to claim their twelfth consecutive victory in the series.

East Gaston received the opening kickoff with hopes to set an early tone or at least send an early message that the Raiders would have to fight for a win. Neither happened. The Warriors ran nine plays from scrimmage, excluding two punts, before the Red ‘O’ took the field...and they were still down 14-0 to the Raiders. Outstanding Special Teams play by South Point established the early momentum. Return Specialist Ray Grier put the Raiders ahead with back-to-back punt returns of 60 and 55 yards for the lead. The Red ‘D’, as they would all game long, shut down the East Gaston offense, limiting the Warriors to short gains and short drives. Following the punt returns, the teams traded possessions as South Point would hold the Warriors and take over on downs but would then be forced to punt on their possession. The Raiders were plagued by penalties (some of the “phantom” nature) on their drive, but the damage had been done in the first. East Gaston carried their fourth possession of the game into the second quarter.

Facing a 4th and 4 from the Warriors’ thirty-seven, the second stanza began with an East Gaston punt. The Raiders benefitted with good field position at their forty-one yardline. FB Naseem Jones quickly carried the Red ‘O’ into Warriors territory at the forty-three. A false start penalty on first down moved the Raiders back near midfield and threatened to slow the drive. But RBs Devon King and Caleb Gibson Hale helped to jumpstart the offense by making perfect cuts through the line for positive gains. Gibson took a pitch from QB Keaton Hale and scampered for 25 yards to the East Gaston three. An illegal shift call moved the ball back five yards to the eight. From there, Jones took charge. With a burst up the middle, Jones carried the ball, and a couple of Warriors, into the endzone for six! South Point advanced the lead by a 20-0 count and were eager for more. Forcing another East Gaston punt, the Raiders began their second drive of the quarter from their 36 yardline. One play, a handoff to Jones, was all that was necessary to move the ball to the fifty. Jones cut off the left side behind a block by OL Jacob Humphrey. Four plays later, Jones rushed for a 7-yard touchdown and Gibson ran for the two-point conversion and South Point had the 28-0 advantage with 3:33 to go before the half. They were not done! From his Linebacker position, Josh Hicks shot down the line and crushed a

Warrior ball carrier for a 1-yard loss, forcing East Gaston into a passing situation. Playing on the defensive side of the ball, DB King benefitted. King's interception and return on the ensuing play put South Point in business deep in the red zone. Four plays later, Jones plowed through from three yards out to give the Raiders a commanding 35-0 lead. DB Nick Gange got into the statistical category on East Gaston's next drive. Gange made a leaping interception to stall the Warriors push and take away any chance for points they might muster before the intermission. The teams headed to the lockerrooms with The Red Raiders in total control 35-0.

To begin the third stanza, South Point had the ball and momentum. But once again, penalties slowed the Raiders' progress and an uncharacteristic fumble was recovered by the Warriors at the East Gaston nine. The Red 'D' stepped up and forced another Warriors punt to give their offense a chance at redemption. The Red 'O' did not disappoint. The sizeable lead allowed the Raiders to substitute key positions with 4:37 remaining on the third quarter clock. Starting in East Gaston territory at the forty-three, the Raiders used a time-consuming seven play drive to close the book on the contest. RB Hunter Hogue was the workhorse of the drive that ended with his seven-yard run for six. The 42 point advantage initiated a live clock with 1:07 to go in the quarter. The Warriors carried their next possession into the final twelve minutes of regulation.

With the clock rolling, neither team amounted another serious scoring threat. South Point was content to pick up first downs and managed to erase over eight minutes from regulation time. The Raiders then held the Warriors for the final 2:10 to close out the decisive victory.

South Point defeated an "overconfidence" opponent and demolished their onfield rival to add to their Black Friday dominance. The Red Raiders blanked East Gaston 42-0 to claim their twelfth consecutive win in the series. Asked about the attitude of the team coming in to the game, QB Keaton Hale explained, "Our thinking was not to take them lightly, take them like any other opponent." The quarterback added that they intended to "keep pushing" and continue to gain momentum as the season moves forward. The work is paying off and the opportunities keep coming for the Raiders. Next up for South Point is a visit to East Rutherford to face the undefeated Cavaliers.

Go Get 'Em, Red!

### **Notable Facts and Thoughts**

East Rutherford boasts a prolific offense as the Cavaliers have scored no less than 34 points in 7 games this season. Their high point total came in a 70-44 win against South Caldwell. A familiar opponent, North Gaston, faced East Rutherford early in the season and managed to put 42 on the board before falling 61-42 to the Cavaliers. Red 'D', Red 'O' ...'nuff said!

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