

Game Recap

Raiders Advance, Withstand Red Tornadoes, 48-13

It may be the most often discussed topic among fans who have never experienced one. Some have included overturned tables, damaged chairs, and scattered trash. Others have been said to cause paint to peel from the walls. And of course, still others have been said to simply include softer, encouraging tones and pats on the back. Whatever may be true, the reality is, the halftime speech is usually depended upon to deliver victory after the final horn sounds. Coaches may downplay its significance, or they may praise its value, but one thing is certain, they will always make the effort to put the allotted intermission time to good use. When former head coach Skip Holtz led East Carolina, he was intent on ensuring an efficient halftime discussion. Coach Holtz would send his Graduate Assistant Coaches to the locker room with three minutes remaining in the second quarter. They were charged with diagramming, on dry erase boards, the various sets used successfully by the opponent in the first half. The Coach's intent was to maximize the halftime intermission to help his players adjust and gain an advantage - or eliminate one as the case may be. With South Point holding a 21-13 halftime lead over the Hickory Red Tornadoes in the opening round of the NCHSAA 3A State Playoffs, the discussions at the half could easily mean the difference between moving on or moving out. The Big Red acted on the adjustments and encouragements discussed after the first 24:00 last Friday night at Lineberger Stadium. South Point shutout Hickory in the second half while adding 27 points to their advantage to claim the 48-13 victory. The win sends the Raiders on to the second round and the Red Tornadoes to basketball season.

South Point won the toss and deferred their option to the second half, electing to send the defense on the field to start the game. Hickory engaged a mix of runs and a smooth passing attack to move the ball downfield. A drive of 4:04 ended with a 3-yard touchdown run and an early 7-0 lead for the Red Tornadoes. The Red 'O' answered with a ground pounding drive of 66 yards that culminated with a QB Patrick Blee 8-yard run for six. K Charlie Birtwistle notched the PAT to bring South Point even at 7-7. On the ensuing Hickory possession, DL Aiden Ramirez made a statement for the Red 'D'. Coming around the end and carrying a blocker with him, Ramirez grabbed the Red Tornadoes quarterback and threw him to the ground for the sack. South Point's

defense then allowed two more plays before forcing a Hickory punt. The Raiders picked up on offense where they left off. Pounding the ball into the line, the Red 'O' used the remainder of the first quarter clock to move the ball to the Red Tornadoes 25-yardline.

With the third play of the second quarter, South Point needed one yard to sustain the drive. A handoff to FB Cam Medlock was in order. Medlock took the ball, hit the line and didn't stop until he covered sixteen yards for the score. The Raiders moved in front 14-7 with 10:41 left in the first half. Hickory tried to keep pace. The Red Tornadoes were able to pick up one first down on their next drive but could not gain midfield. Their second punt of the game gave the Raiders another chance for points. Moving from their 27-yardline, South Point picked up positive yardage, driving to the Hickory 4-yardline. Medlock then carried over for the touchdown that gave the Raiders a 21-7 advantage. Hickory did not fold the tents. Instead, they completed a few passes to move deep into Raider's territory. Then from the 7-yardline the Red Tornadoes cut into the lead with a pass for six. South Point took a knee to run out the remaining time in the second quarter and took the 21-13 advantage into the locker room.

With the lead to begin the third it wouldn't seem that urgent adjustments needed to be made for South Point to maintain control of the game. But with the opening possession of the quarter, it quickly became obvious that the Raiders' plan was to seize momentum and not let go! A drive of 2:41 ended with a 34-yard Medlock touchdown run and a 28-13 advantage. The Red 'D' then held firm and the Raiders offense was able to return to the field. WB Dawson Tobin got things started with a 7-yard run out to the Raiders 17-yardline. The drive ended quickly though because on the next play Blee broke free for 83 yards and a touchdown! The quick drive ended scoring in the third quarter and South Point carried the commanding 34-13 lead into the final stanza.

On a drive that carried over from the third, the Red Tornadoes were held on downs and the Red 'O' was given an early chance for points in the fourth quarter. The Raiders covered 54 yards in three plays to pad the lead. Medlock's 24-yard burst moved South Point out to a 41-13 lead with 10:38 remaining. The teams then traded possessions as the Raiders began to empty the sidelines. At the 4:18 mark, Hickory went to the air to try to pick up points in a hurry. The plan backfired. A fourth-and-five pass was picked off at the South Point 42-yardline by CB Jayden Garrett-Straite. Fifty-eight yards of open field was ahead of the cornerback and Garrett-Straite outran the field for the pick six! His score would represent the final nail in the coffin as CB Mica Stowe intercepted a pass on the ensuing Red Tornadoes drive to seal the 48-13 victory. Asked about the

defenses ability to make adjustments in the second half and shutdown the Hickory offense, DL Josh Crowder explained, "Depending on the down and distance, Coach made some adjustments at halftime, and we were able to respond." The defensive lineman further stated that the Raiders' focus remained on Hickory and no thought was given to a potential second round opponent. Crowder pointed to the scoreboard as proof of the team's resolve to take it one game at a time. CB Mica Stowe echoed the response that changes at halftime enabled the defensive secondary to defend the pass and better control the tempo. "Coach helped us see everything better; he changed a couple of coverages (related) to a couple of their sets, and it worked out", said Stowe. The words of the defensive teammates perfectly described efficient use of the halftime break as the Raiders shutout the Red Tornadoes in the second half while putting 27 on the board in the final two quarters.

Without being in the locker room, fans can only speculate as to the tone of the halftime speech. Efficient use of the time will usually translate into effective adjustments in the second half, no matter which side of the scoreboard a team finds themselves on. In the first round of the NCHSAA 3A State Playoffs, South Point carried a lead into the intermission but was not content to "ride out" the clock into the second round. Rather the Big Red made adjustments, stepped up the pressure, and maintained momentum in a convincing victory that advances them one step closer to their goal.

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

Next up for the Raiders is a rematch of last season's Western Final. Greensboro Dudley doesn't appear to have missed a beat following their state championship from a year ago. After an opening win and two consecutive losses, the Panthers reeled off six straight shutout victories. Focus and preparation will continue to be keys to victory for the Red Raiders.