

## **Red Raiders Remain Undefeated - Slam Huskies, 42-3**

September 25, 2011

South Point fully expected a stiff challenge from the previously unbeaten Hunter Huss Huskies when the two Big South 3A Conference foes met Friday night in Gastonia. The Red Raiders also fully expected to put forth an effort that would keep them at the top of the conference standings when the night was done. Only one of those expectations was realized as South Point convincingly manhandled Hunter Huss en route to a 42-3 victory. Entering the contest, the Red Raiders were not without their own challenges. Injuries and fundamental lapses can plague teams on all levels of competition, but true champions deal with, and overcome, obstacles that hinder greatness. South Point displayed a remarkable perseverance that carried them through against the Huskies.

Hunter Huss received the opening kickoff and began play at their own twenty-three yard line. From the first play from scrimmage, South Point took advantage and never looked back. On a play that appeared to be a flea flicker, the pitch back to the quarterback was muffed and the Red Raiders quickly pounced on the ball. In just over a minute into the ballgame, Troy Leeper had rumbled into the endzone for a 7-0 South Point lead. The Red Raiders' defense would hold and South Point would quickly score again. Leeper, the customary workhorse for the Red Raiders, rumbled 47 yards to the Huss one yard line on the second offensive possession. During the run Leeper made an impressive spin out of a would-be tacklers grip before racing into the open field. He was rewarded for his effort by being handed the ball for the one yard score! Afterward a blocked punt set up South Point deep in Huskies territory for what would be the Red Raiders last touchdown of the first half, another Leeper one yard plunge to put South Point up 21-0. As the second quarter began, South Point would begin to experience their first missteps of the contest, mistakes that would be few yet costly.

On a possession that began at the end of the first quarter, Hunter Huss would score early in the second to get on the board. A drive that was facilitated by Red Raider penalties put the Huskies at the 32 yard line of South Point. From here the "bright spot" of the evening for Huss, the kicking game, went to work. An impressive 49 yard field goal was essentially a victory for both sides. The Huskies put points on the scoreboard and the Red Raiders had limited the damage caused by their own miscues. All seemed to be back on track until a pass by Patrick Horne was deflected at the line of scrimmage and intercepted near the Huskies fifteen. The Red defense held and forced a punt but South Point again was stung by a costly mistake. A fumbled exchange between Leeper and Horne gave the Huskies new life with time remaining before half. Huss was unable, though, to muster positive yardage against an inspired Red Raider defense and the half ended with South Point leading 21-3.

Halftime speeches appeared to benefit both squads, at least initially, as the third quarter began. The Red Raiders received the opening kickoff of the second half and promptly marched to a touchdown to advance the lead, 28-3. But the Huskies fought hard to gain a measure of respect. On the ensuing possession, Huss took advantage of consecutive personal foul and a roughing the passer calls against South Point to sustain a drive. Prior to the penalties, the Red 'D' had thrown the Huskies for two straight losses, appearing to force Huss into third and long situations. The defense did not waver though, but rather was able, through perseverance, to regain their composure and force a Huskie turnover. Jeremy Sanders stepped in front of a pass, picked it off, and made a great return to the South Point forty-five to set up the Red Raiders. The Hunter Huss possession ran nearly seven minutes off the clock, by far their most impressive drive but not nearly enough on the night. Later in the contest, Justus Watkins ended another Huskie threat with an interception. South Point would force another fumble late in the contest that would bring Huss' turnover total to four for the game. The hard-nosed play by the defense was impressive and resulted in the lowest offensive output of the season for Hunter Huss.

The Red Raiders added two touchdowns in the final stanza to account for the 42-3 final. A Leeper run of fifteen yards provided opportunity for backups to enter the game. Adam Andrew took over for Horne and Tyler Bray entered for Leeper. The offensive line continued to open holes for South Point ball carriers. Oftentimes, Red Raider offensive linemen would be seen blocking downfield after a play had crossed the line of scrimmage. Asked about the expectations of the linemen relative to blocking, Camden Van Pelt admitted that they're expected to "find somebody to hit" if initial contact has taken an opponent out of the play. "Sometimes (I) may be responsible for a linebacker and if he's not there, then I'll find somebody," said Van Pelt.

South Point found success in all phases of the game and once again it would be difficult to exclusively credit a particular team for the victory. Similarly, individual accomplishments, while routinely evident are overshadowed by the total team effort. One of South Point's regular standouts was noticeably absent on Friday night. The Red Raiders were without the services of Ramon Costner, an outstanding athlete often used on offense, defense, and special teams. Costner was obviously dejected by his inability to assist his teammates on the field Friday night. But his presence, experience, and leadership will continue to be an inspiration to his capable teammates as the Red Raiders press on toward their championship goal.

South Point expected to be undefeated and at the top of the Big South 3A standings following their matchup with the previously unbeaten Hunter Huss Huskies. The Red Raiders played well enough to accomplish the goal but not without some concerns. Quarterback Patrick Horne suggested that mistakes are going to occur on a football field and sometimes those mistakes seem to happen all at once. The measure of a championship team is marked by how that team responds and overcomes those mistakes. Perseverance is a step in the right direction, a step in the direction of a championship.

Next up, South Point hosts the Ashbrook Greenwave at Lineberger Stadium as conference play continues. No Surfboard required!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

### **Notable Facts and Thoughts**

In spite of the unblemished record going in, Hunter Huss proved to be no match for a powerful South Point Red Raider squad. Ashbrook, conversely and strictly considering season statistics, will not seem to be a comparable match for the Red Raiders, yet South Point should expect to get the best of whatever the Greenwave can muster. The target remains squarely on the backs of the Red Raiders! Keep it there, Red! Shutdown Ashbrook's 'A' game!