

Dealing With Adversity - Red Raiders Roll Over Mountaineers, 45-9

September 18, 2011

If South Point football teams have learned anything from being the perennial class of the conference, it's dealing with the many factors, good and not-so-good, that come with being the best on the field. Friday night proved no exception to that learning process as the Red Raiders hosted the Kings Mountain Mountaineers at Lineberger Stadium. Both teams were exposed to some valuable football lessons. The spirited battle kicked off Big South 3A Conference play and the squads gave notice to the intensity that would be expected among conference matchups throughout the season. South Point overcame costly penalties, rushed to their best offensive output of the season, and discovered how to deal with different adversities en route to a 45-9 whipping of Kings Mountain.

With the games second possession, South Point set an early tone for the contest. In fact the statement should serve notice to the Big South 3A Conference that while the Red Raiders' offense may be stopped, no one, as yet, seems to know how! On first down, Horne handed to Leeper, who broke through the left side of the line and into the open field for a gain to the Kings Mountain 39 yard line. South Point continued to pound the ground game over the short field before Devan Robbins scored on a 1 yard sweep to the endzone. In the quarter, the Red Raiders would work the clock on offense while the defense would hold the Mountaineers to two punts on two possessions. The paltry 7-0 lead would mark South Point's second lowest first quarter point production since going scoreless in the first quarter against Lincolnton. No doubt the Mountaineers celebrated the opportunity to remain in the game through the first twelve minutes of play! Kings Mountain's encouragement carried over into the second quarter.

Penalties would cost the Red Raiders and force them to punt the ball to the Mountaineers early in the second. Kings Mountain made the best of the chance, overcoming their own miscues and mustering a field goal to cut the lead to four at 7-3. South Point immediately answered by again marching downfield deep into Mountaineer territory. The drive, however, stalled and Dayton Rogers was called upon to put points on the board. Rogers' 26 yard field goal made the score 10-3 in South Point's favor. What ensued established the tale of the game. The Red Raiders defense continued to work hard against a pass-happy Kings Mountain offense and the South Point offense would continue to grind out yardage against the Mountaineer defense. With breakout runs of 40, 57, 35, 23, and 65 yards by Leeper, Horne, and Bray, the Red Raiders would ultimately attain their highest offensive output of the season (549 total yards). But South Point would do so while dealing with some frustrating calls by the officials. On the Red Raiders' third and final possession of the first half, they were called for two "block in the back" penalties, one "unsportsmanlike conduct" penalty and one "delay of game" infraction. Enough was enough for the offense because following the delay of game violation, South Point needed but two plays to get into

the endzone. Horne hooked up with Ramon Costner on a thirty-five yard pass completion to the Mountaineer eleven and Leeper (apparently ready for a break!) would carry in on the next play for the touchdown. The Red Raiders lead at the half, 17-3, was comfortable, but the penalties against South Point were anything but acceptable.

A successful (for Kings Mountain) onside kick to begin the third quarter added to the Red Raiders' prior frustrations. On the recovery and possession, the Mountaineers took advantage of a personal foul call against South Point to move to the Red Raider 18 yard line. They would later score to draw close but were flagged for an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, backing up the PAT attempt. The attempt failed and the score stood at 17-9. Horne moved South Point downfield after the Mountaineer score and matched the Kings Mountain touchdown with a three yard run. The touchdown pushed the Red Raiders' lead to fifteen at 24-9. South Point was determined to overcome their own penalty issues as the quarter progressed but at times things seem to be out of their control. On the Mountaineers second possession of the third quarter, both teams were flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct and the frustrations continued. Inspired by the aggravating events, the Red defense forced the issue. A scrambling Mountaineer quarterback was crushed behind the line of scrimmage and the ball popped loose. South Point recovered at their own thirty-one yard line. Horne and Leeper were again eager to polish off the Mountaineers. On first down, Horne carried to the Mountaineer 35 and on the new first down, Leeper finished with a 35 yard touchdown run. With just over 4 minutes remaining in the third, the Red Raiders' advantage was 31-9, and the game was well in hand. But the dark cloud of infractions continued to hang over the heads of the Red Raiders! An amazing pass deflection on a third down play was instead considered a pass interference penalty against South Point. The emphatic objections compounded the call by drawing another unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Like their hopes in the game, the Kings Mountain drive was kept alive by a little yellow handkerchief! The Red Raiders would not allow their intensity to waver. The South Point defense drove the Mountaineers backward and forced Kings Mountain into making some costly mistakes. A holding penalty against the Mountaineers dug the hole deeper and they were forced to punt with under two minutes remaining in the quarter. Still again Leeper was not content to spend much time on the field! A 56 yard burst into the Mountaineer secondary yielded another Red Raider touchdown and as the final stanza began, South Point would be able to rest many starters while leading 38-9.

In the fourth quarter, the teams traded possessions with South Point holding Kings Mountain on downs and then being forced to punt. The flow of the game had not changed relative to the involvement of the officiating crew. On the Mountaineers next possession, an interception return for a touchdown was called back for a block in the back. The Red Raiders kept the ball which was placed at the South Point 35 yard line. Adam Andrew had replaced Horne at quarterback and on first down he handed the ball to Tyler Bray, in for Leeper at fullback. Bray broke to the outside and raced 65 yards for the games final score. His touchdown drew the ire of the Kings Mountain sidelines forcing the officials to again get involved! "I was just trying to run the clock out," said Bray of the run that made the score 45-9. He credited lineman David Braunscheidel with making a block on the end that created a wall after the intended hole had closed. Bray added, "Dan Johnson had a great block for me downfield, too," describing how he read his blocks en route to the remarkable

touchdown run.

In the 45-9 victory over Kings Mountain, South Point was exposed to, and displayed many factors that affect a game's outcome. There was the challenge posed by the opponent, the knowledge that as a perennial power, every team will pull out all stops to defeat the Red Raiders. There was the concern that they may not play in a manner that officials deem fair and that this may change as officiating crews change. (Ever heard the shout "Let 'em play!"?) And the Red Raiders served notice that the potent offense is here to stay! Stop it...if you can!

Next week South Point travels to face Big South 3A Conference foe Hunter Huss in Gastonia. The Huskies are undefeated and loaded on offense, so the stage is set. There's room for only one at the top...sorry Huskies!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

An unusually large number of "unsportsmanlike conduct" calls were made against both teams, especially during the second half of the contest. Along with the number of flags thrown for the offending rule, the reasons for the infractions were muddled at best. What was deemed as "taunting" in many cases was considered to be "celebratory" in the minds of those penalized. Lesson Learned - It's important to recognize the tendencies, if they exist, for officiating crews to slant toward a particular call. The challenge is then to play within those bounds so as to refrain from repeating an infraction. An official is expected to call a game in an effort to maintain fairness and control without becoming a factor in the outcome of the contest. Some of the calls made Friday night came close to "crossing that line." Credit the Red Raiders for playing through the unpopular/questionable calls and refusing to let the frustration stand in the way of their achieving victory!