

South Point Grinds Out Victory - Run Over Lincolnnton 35-21

August 28, 2011

South Point took charge early, withstood a valiant comeback effort, and rushed to the win in Friday night's matchup with the Lincolnnton Wolves. The game featured two of the area's top teams and Von Ray Harris Field was the venue for the hard-nosed, grind-it-out contest. Momentum was key and both teams fought to "gain and sustain" in order to achieve victory. A lesson learned is that momentum may be taken or given away. Either way, teams of championship caliber take advantage of opportunities and they minimize and/or overcome their own mistakes. The Red Raiders gave and received the lesson en route to an exciting 35-21 thumping of the Wolves.

South Point kicked off to begin the game, electing to establish the defense from the outset. But a fortunate turn of events, similar to the onside kick recovery to start the game a week ago, altered the beginning of the contest. On the first play from scrimmage, in fact, the initial snap of the ballgame, the Wolves fumbled and the Red Raiders defense quickly pounced on the ball. The South Point offense was immediately in business, taking possession at the Lincolnnton 39 yard line. The Red Raiders advanced to the Wolves' 15 yard line but came up a yard short on a third down play. Opting to put points on the board early, South Point sent the field goal team onto the field. Jordan Kagen's snap was on target, Patrick Horne's hold was good and Dayton Roger's kick was solid. But the ball sailed just wide left of the mark and the score remained at zero. The Wolves took over at the twenty yard line but were held to a three-and-out series and forced to punt by the Red Raiders' inspired defense. The second possession of the game for South Point lasted through the first quarter's end and established one of the story lines for the game. The Red Raiders held the ball for a remarkable 10:53 of the game's opening 12 minutes. A ball control game plan, accomplished through a brutal running attack, advanced South Point's cause.

To begin the second quarter of play, the ball rested at the Lincolnnton 28 yard line and the Red Raiders were again threatening for the first score of the contest. Running backs Troy Leeper, Tyler Bray and quarterback Horne continued to move the ball downfield before Horne ran over from the six to open the scoring. South Point had grabbed momentum, with the time of possession, and the early second quarter lead at 7-0. The Red Raiders sustained that momentum with the ensuing kickoff. Rogers and his teammates executed a perfect onside kick, catching the front line of the Wolves receiving team off guard and covering the loose ball to send the Red offense back onto the field. The optimal field position helped South Point to march to the Lincolnnton one where Leeper plowed through for a two touchdown margin.

South Point would continue to pound the ball on the ground, which, in spite of a few long breakout runs, appeared at times to be less productive than expected. Asked about the apparent rough going and hard hitting of Lincolnnton, Leeper admitted, "when we knew they

were coming we were okay." Horne added, "Coach said to keep popping it until they stopped it short or threw it for a loss and we just kept coming." The player's words would prove accurate as the Red Raiders never abandoned the ground attack. And when it counted, the ground attack didn't abandon the Red Raiders!

Lincolnton fought to recapture momentum as they now trailed 14-0 about halfway through the second quarter. The Wolves, relying on their athleticism, went in to their playbook to call the one play that could turn things around. South Point obliged by letting a Wolves receiver get fifteen yards behind, into the clear and headed for the endzone. The Red Raiders, faked on a down and out route that was turned upfield, essentially relinquished the momentum they had built. Lincolnton drew within seven at 14-7 and ignited the Wolfpack crowd.

South Point would reclaim what they had given up on the next series of plays. Beginning at their forty yard line, the Red Raiders' offensive line pushed the Lincolnton defenders downfield. Leeper then pushed the lead back to 14 as he scored from two yards out. But the advantage would not last as the Wolves would use most of the remainder of the half to again draw close. Lincolnton's quick strike ability would keep them in the ballgame. The first half time of possession heavily favored South Point who held the ball for an astonishing 19:32 of the first twenty-four minutes. The halftime score, 21-14, although favoring the Red Raiders, was not reflective of South Point's ball control offense and solid defense. The expectation was that momentum was certain to swing back in favor of the Red Raiders as they were slated to receive the opening kickoff of the second half.

South Point could not immediately reclaim the momentum they had established in the first half on offense. It appeared though that without scoring, the Red Raiders had put themselves in a good position to retake control of the contest. An opening possession punt by South Point was downed at the Lincolnton one yard line. An unpopular pass interference call against the Red Raiders and later a personal foul "mistake" cost South Point their lead. Amid chants of "Wolfpack" echoing across the stadium, the Wolves knotted the score at 21 on a 99 yard touchdown drive aided by the penalties. Rather than taking back momentum the Red Raiders had seemingly placed it, along with the game, into the hands (or mouths as it were!) of the Wolves.

But South Point was determined not to give up or give in. After the teams traded punts, and with 0:38 remaining in the third quarter, Leeper reeled off a 49 yard run on first down to set the Red Raiders up deep in Lincolnton territory to begin the final quarter of play. Horne plunged up the middle from the one yard line on the drive to give South Point the lead once again at 28-21. When the Wolves were forced to punt on the next possession, thanks to a tackle for loss and a quarterback sack by the Red Raiders' defense, South Point was poised to put the game in the record books! Converting on three third down plays, the Red Raiders burned the clock and Horne's 6 yard touchdown run burned the Wolves!

South Point had triumphed 35-21 in the hard fought contest among two of high school football's best. Asked about the flow of the game and the importance of the early season victory against a formidable opponent, Horne suggested that it was "huge." The senior quarterback added that it brought out the "character in the team." Character will make a difference along the way as the Red Raiders work toward the ultimate goal.

Next week South Point hosts the rival East Gaston Warriors, who once again are certain that this is the year that they own the Red Raiders. Black Friday! Bring IT!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

South Point's time of possession for the Lincolnton game was 35:31 leaving just 12:29 for the Wolves. Keeping a potent opposing offense off the field minimizes their opportunities to score and is therefore an excellent defensive strategy.

RaiderNation experienced, for the first time this season, edge-of-the-seat excitement when the Lincolnton Wolves tied the game midway through the 3rd quarter. In fact, some fans left their seats altogether and lined the fence around the field to support the team! Seen this before?!

JV Report by Calvin Craig

Red Raiders hold off the Wolves

Despite a 4th quarter comeback by Lincolnton, the Red Raiders (2-0) managed to hold off the Lincolnton Wolves 33-22 in their home opener. □

South Point got on to the board first with Tanner Muse 20 yard touchdown run. Muse scored early in the third quarter with a 64 yard touchdown run that put the Red Raiders up 20-6.

The Red Raider defense stopped several Lincolnton drives. Richard Dunning intercepted the Lincolnton quarterback in the 1st half, and Jeffrey Pearsall recovered a fumble on a Lincolnton kick return that lead to a South Point drive ending in Donnie Hunter's 9 yard touchdown run that put South Point up 33-6.

South Point quarterback Jaquan Brooks hit Donovan Stowe in stride for a 64 yard touchdown pass and scored on a touchdown run in the second half.

The game wasn't as close as the score would indicate. Lincolnton scored twice in the 4th quarter, but the Wolves third touchdown came extremely late in the 4th quarter to cut the Red Raiders lead to 11.

The JV squad travels to their rival East Gaston next Thursday night at 7:00pm in Mount Holly.