

Continuous Improvement...Red and Ready!

August 14, 2011

A new beginning to an established tradition (officially) takes place Friday night at Lineberger Stadium on the campus of South Point High School. The Red Raiders will kickoff the 2011 football campaign as they host the Clover Blue Eagles. Led by former head coach John Devine, the Blue Eagles will be seeking their third win against the Raiders in as many meetings. South Point will be guided by new head coach Mickey Lineberger, who long assisted Devine, as the Red Raiders Offensive Coordinator.

Two years removed from the Raiders' 2009 NCHSAA 3AA State Championship, this year's squad features a group led by seniors who, as sophomores, experienced that pinnacle of high school football success. High expectations abound following the championship and last season's Big South 3A Conference title. And these Raiders appear eager to put it all out on the field as they cut a path to Chapel Hill*! Such talk of a state championship may seem premature with a regulation game yet to be played. But the reality is that teams are likely to accomplish that for which they prepare, and there are over 300 other North Carolina high school football teams dreaming of becoming, if not practicing to become, 2011 State Champions.

Coach Lineberger admitted that the team gets a "little better" with every practice, in fact, Coach has suggested that, "we want to get 200 feet better after every game; we want to be 200 feet closer to Chapel Hill after every game!" He substantiated his claim during a recent scrimmage against Shelby High School as he put a twist on the famous "three yards and a cloud of dust" description used by Woody Hayes to illustrate the former Ohio State coach's offensive philosophy. Coach Lineberger urged his team to gain "four yards and a state championship!" The players responded with an outstanding effort on both offense and defense and perhaps gave a glimpse of what fans could expect on Friday nights in the fall.

The effort to improve continued at the Alexander Central Cougar Football Jamboree. South Point faced teams from Hickory Ridge, Statesville, Ardrey Kell, Hopewell, and the host Alexander Central Cougars. While there is no official scorekeeping during the scrimmages, fans tally the scores and note the positives (and negatives) of their favorite squad. From the "for what it's worth" department, South Point outscored each of their five opponents during the (3) ten minute sessions. Senior quarterback Patrick Horne and his backup, sophomore Derek Perry connected on numerous pass plays, some of which went for touchdowns. Senior running back Troy Leeper carried a load and was adequately assisted by sophomore Tyler Bray. The duo delivered more blows on the night than they received and were rarely taken down by initial contact. Senior Ramon

Costner and junior Devan Robbins were also involved in the action, both showcasing their speed around the outside for big gains. Senior center Jordan Kagen anchors an offensive that is expected to push for positive yardage on each offensive play.

Defensively the Raiders will count on senior linebacker Jordan Forney who picked off two passes in the Alexander Central scrimmages. Behind Forney the defensive backs that include seniors Jalen Porter and Justus Watkins will be counted on to defend any deep threat attempted by Raiders' opponents. The two were actively involved in the scrimmages, accounting for hard hits and timely pass deflections. A relentless defensive line with senior Payton Flowers and junior Jack Gardner (6' 4" 240 lb) should help the Raiders control the line of scrimmage.

Continuous improvement depends upon maximum effort, undying determination, and a champion's heart. As such, RaiderNation should expect to read the accounts of many other players as the season progresses. In fact, given the quality of play on the field, every player on the roster has at some time given reason to be recognized. This is a remarkable (and encouraging) testament of a team with lofty goals.

Chapel Hill is miles away and the journey begins Friday night! The Clover Blue Eagles provide the initial hurdle. Time to prove that no one will stand in our way!

Go Get 'Em, Red!

Notable Facts and Thoughts

South Point has never defeated a team from outside the state of North Carolina. It is notable that this record follows former head coach John Devine, who now directs the Clover squad. Someone's record will be broken Friday night.

Pre-season polls place South Point in the top ten among 3A teams. Conference foe, Crest is ranked #1 and according to the schedule, they may hold that position until October 29, 2011.

*According to www.nchsaa.org