

CLASS 4A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP: PUEBLO SOUTH 25, PINE CREEK 14

Colts bend, don't break vs. Eagles

South's D dries up Pine Creek

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THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

DENVER — Defense does win championships. Even to those who surrender some yards.

South High School did just enough on Saturday in keeping the powerful Pine Creek offense at bay en route to a 25-14 victory in the Class 4A state championship game at Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

South's game plan was to limit the explosive plays of the Eagles and particularly sophomore running back David Moore III. While Moore managed 176 yards on 32 carries and a touchdown and Pine Creek rolled up 387 of offense, it found the end zone just twice.

Holding the Eagles 17 points under their 31-point average a game was the difference.

South defensive coordinator Matt Graham, who has been with the football program for three decades, was beaming in the middle of a Pueblo celebration on the field. He explained how his defense managed to contain the Eagles.

"We just had to try and contain No. 2 (Moore III)," he said. "They used him out of various forma-



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/MATT WEIGAND

South High School's Ryan Montoya (25) levels Pine Creek quarterback JC Coulter during the Class 4A state championship game on Saturday at Sports Authority Field at Mile High in Denver. Montoya was called for a personal foul on the play and Coulter left the game for good following the hit. South went on to win 25-14.

tions. We just tried to load up and stop him.

"We're not worried about yards, we just try and keep them out of the end zone. It's kind of been our thing all season where we give up some yards and stiffen on the goal line."

South's defensive approach was simple — slow down a Pine Creek running game that has averaged better than 200 yards a game and force quarterback JC Coulter

to beat the Colts through the air. Coulter was a pedestrian 8 for 13 for 103 yards and backup Gavin Herberg was 3 for 8 for 51 yards. Neither threw a touchdown.

"Our plan was to go out there and play like we usually do," South senior cornerback Jesse Anzar said. "The thing we were looking for was energy because last week against Broomfield (a 21-14 in the semifinals) we came out flat and it was

a tough game. We came out stronger today from the get-go.

"We wanted them to throw the ball. After we got two stops on defense, from there it just got better. It was awesome."

The plan worked to perfection in the first half as the Eagles were forced to punt on three of their first four possessions and stopped on fourth down on another.

Pine Creek's lone threat in the first half

lost the ball scrambling away for the South rush and Khalil Eaton recovered near midfield for the Colts.

Pine Creek managed two touchdowns in the second half but it was always playing from behind.

Junior linebacker Braden Christie said the effort started in the film room and carried over onto the field.

"We spent a lot of time in the study room going over film and in practice went over a lot of schemes and going over our jobs and what we had to do," Christie said. "As long as we do our jobs and they don't get on the board, we're happy with that."

"There's ups and downs in games. It's just a matter of how you choose to respond to them. You either chose to lay down or chose to come back up and survive. We chose to fight it off."

Graham gave plenty of his credit to his defensive coaches.

"I just want to thank Kevin and Greg Cozzolino and Aaron Hernandez," he said. "I didn't do this all by myself. It's been a helluva ride."

Anzar summed it up best.

"We have some of the best athletes in Colorado in Pueblo," he said. "People don't respect Pueblo a lot."

Now they do.
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