

Raiders escape on Williams' late TD

By DWIGHT FRADY
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FOREST CITY — Senior quarterback Jeff Williams raced 80 yards late in the third quarter here Friday night to give South Point's Red Raiders a 7-3 double triumph over East Rutherford.

The win not only assured the Red Raiders of no worse than a tie for the Southwestern 3-A Conference championship, but more importantly, South Point's first playoff appearance since 1973.

South Point has a chance for a perfect 10-0 season for the first time since '73, when they play Chase in Sandy Mush next Friday night.

South Point has assured itself of a state 3-A

playoff berth by virtue of its 13-6 victory earlier in the season over Shelby, which has lost only one conference game.

The bigger Cavalier squad, coached by former Cherryville mentor Tom Wright, kept South Point backed up deep in its own territory for practically the entire first half, primarily on Kenny Arrowood's punting.

South Point, the state's second-ranked 3-A team in last week's poll, got possession on its 16, 16, 20, eight and 45-yard line in the first half. The Raider defense, meanwhile, did another stellar job, limiting the Cavaliers, now 5-3 in conference play and 6-3 overall, to only a field goal during the ball game.

After an Arrowood punt to the Red Raider

eight, June Jones fumbled on the first play from scrimmage, and East Rutherford's Brad Causby recovered at the Raider 12. The Cavaliers, with fourth and three from the Raider five-yard line called on Darrell Ledbetter on a 22-yard field goal attempt, and he split the uprights at the 3:33 mark in the second period.

Larry Tribble returned the ensuing kickoff from his own 17 to the South Point 45. Williams, who gained 127 yards in 13 carries on the night, picked up a first down, carrying to the East Rutherford 40 on the first play. Chip Gibson gained seven yards, and the Cavaliers were penalized for holding on the play to their own 19.

However, the Cavaliers held the Raiders for five yards on three running plays, and Williams' pass to Boone Davis was incomplete.

Late in the third period, East Rutherford began a drive on its own 32-yard line and with 200-pound running back Dennis Wesley leading the way, picked up three consecutive first downs and had a first and 10 at the Big Red 16. The South Point defense again rose to the occasion. On a fourth-and-five, Ledbetter's 28-yard field goal attempt was short.

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Raiders

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Then Williams, who had earlier played major roles in the key victories over Shelby and Kings Mountain, broke East Rutherford's hearts, but brought South Point's fans to their feet in ecstasy on a counter play. Williams twisted and turned up-field past Cavalier defenders, broke loose at the mid-field stripe and outraced all Cavalier defenders on a breath-taking 80-yard scamper, the 165-pounder's longest run from scrimmage.

That touchdown was all Coach Jim Biggerstaff's team needed to make the 3-A playoffs against the Western 3-A Piedmont conference champion week-after-next. That game will be played at the Raiders' Lineberger Stadium.

Tim Parrish booted the extra point after Williams' touchdown, and the Raiders had the big 7-3 lead with only 53 seconds remaining in the third period.

The fourth quarter, as was much of the game, was a punting game between Arrowood and Williams, who had one of his better punting nights of the year.

East Rutherford scared the dreanched Raider side of the field when it got possession of the ball at its own 23-yard line with 3:52 remaining

in the game.

After a five-yard run by Chuck Surratt that gave the Cavaliers a first down, a late-hit by a Raider moved the ball to the mid-field-stripe. Two plays later, the Raiders were again slapped with another 15-yard late hit penalty that placed the ball at the South Point 33 with 1:21 remaining. The hard-running Wesley gained to the 27, but East Rutherford was called for holding on the play, placing the ball back at the Raider 42.

Two plays later, Williams, who has often-times been the target of opposing quarterbacks' passing this season, intercepted Mark Whittaker's pass at the Raider 10 and returned to the South Point 47 with only 23 seconds remaining in the game. The Raiders, with the Cavaliers having no time outs remaining, saw the clock wind down to zero.

The slick, muddy field conditions hampered South Point's passing game tremendously. Williams attempted only three passes on the night, completing but one for seven yards, his lowest of the season. His running made up for that.

Each team managed only seven first downs in the game. Other than Williams' 127 yards, fullback Perry Fewell gained 35 yards in 10 carries and Gibson gained 26 yards in three carries in addition to playing another

outstanding defensive game, along with Kyle Miller and nose-guard Jeff Hoyle.

Wesley, a work horse for the Cavaliers, carried the ball 25 times for 101 yards of East Rutherford's 143 total yards rushing.

The win was Biggerstaff's 90th in his 11th season at South Point, with 21 losses and five ties.

"It seems like the games are getting tougher every week," said Biggerstaff. "They all want us bad. I'm just glad that we won this one to clinch a playoff berth, which the kids wanted to do perhaps too badly.

"I thought we were tight tonight. We didn't play relaxed football. Perhaps we put a little too much pressure on them earlier in the week, and as a result, I think it showed tonight.

"But I'm glad we won and got the playoff berth before the final game. We did it ourselves and didn't have to depend on someone else helping us out."

This is the first time South Point will have played in the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) playoffs. South Point's other two playoff appearances came in the old Western North Carolina High School Activities Association. This is the third year that South Point has been in the NCHSAA.

South Point	0	0	7	0-7
East Rutherford	0	1	0	0-3

Scoring Summary

ER — Ledbetter, 22 field goal

SP — Williams, 80 run (Parrish kick)

	South Point	East Rutherford
First Downs	7	7
Yards Rushing	196	143
Passing	1-3-0	1-4-1
Yards Passing	7	7
Fumbles Lost	2	0
Punting	6-36.5	7-36.0
Yards Penalized	4-40	4-50

EAST RUTHERFORD RUSHING — Wesley 25-101; Ross 10-16; Surratt 6-28; Whittaker 3 for -2

SOUTH POINT RUSHING — Williams 13-127; Fewell 10-35; Gibson 3-26; Jones 3-3; Tribble 1-2, Armstrong 1-2

EAST RUTHERFORD PASSING — Whittaker 1-4-1 for 7

SOUTH POINT PASSING — Williams 1-3-0 for 7

EAST RUTHERFORD RECEIVING — Duncan 1-7

SOUTH POINT RECEIVING — Davis 1-7