



Gazette photo by Pete Decker

Buster Benton of North Gaston breaks loose for TD
... he later blocked field goal that led to Wildcats' win

Freakish finish gives 'Cats win

By Dwight Frady

Special To The Gazette

BELMONT — North Gaston's 14-10 victory over South Point Friday night had a finish that had to be seen to be believed.

South Point's Red Raiders held a 10-6 lead against North Gaston's Wildcats here Friday night at Lineberger Stadium. They held that lead with a fourth down and 4 yards to go at the North Gaston 15 with only 32 seconds remaining in the game.

Coach Jim Biggerstaff of the Red Raiders called on sophomore Mike Dudko for a 32-yard field goal attempt.

Buster Benton of the Wildcats, one of the Southwestern 3-A Conference's premier backs, blocked the field goal attempt, teammate Toby Gwinn picked it up at the Wildcat 25, and raced 75 yards for a touchdown with only 23 seconds remaining in the game for a 12-10 Wildcat lead.

Benton ran for the academic two-point conversion and the Wildcats had, in unbelievable fashion, handed South Point its first defeat in the series between the two teams. South Point had won 10 straight games from the Wildcats before Friday night's stunning climax.

"We were looking for a fake field goal," Coach Roger Dixon of the Wildcats said. "With the kicker Biggerstaff's got, I might have tried the same thing."

"He was trying to pad his team's lead to seven points, which would have forced us to score a touchdown and then a two-point conversion."

"We were just due for something good to happen to us."

Something finally did. We worked our behinds off in practice this week. We did a good job of containing their running attack and I give our coaches credit for that. This was a very big win for our guys."

Biggerstaff, obviously crestfallen in the coaches office, said: "This is a heartbreaking thing for me. I've been in coaching for 25 years and this is the first time I've seen it happen."

"My thinking was to try and make it 13-6 and force them to get eight to beat us — and even if we missed, they'd have the ball deep in their territory with precious little time on the clock."

"It was a low kick, a freakish thing — but now I wish I hadn't called for the field goal attempt."

"Please give North Gaston credit," he said. "I think North Gaston outplayed us."

South Point jumped out to a 10-0 lead, a 35-yard field goal by Dudko and a 19-yard run by quarterback Mark Young in the first period. Both scores were set up by North Gaston fumbles.

Benton, who gained 124 yards in 13 carries in the first half before winding up the game with 130 yards in 23 carries, got North Gaston back into the game with a 59-yard touchdown run with 7:38 remaining in the first half.

A running attempt for the conversion fell short, leaving the Wildcats only four points behind at halftime. North Gaston had dominated the second period after fumbles and penalties had hurt them in the first quarter.

Both teams played outstanding

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Wildcats

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defensive football in the second half.

John Houser of the Wildcats intercepted a Young pass at the Raider 35 and returned it to the 19. South Point stiffened and held at the 21. From that point, the Raiders moved the ball to the North Gaston nine before they were stopped short of a first down by two yards.

North Gaston, with time running out and third and 11 at its

own 31, saw two passes by quarterback David Jones fall incomplete with a little more than two minutes remaining in the game.

It looked like South Point's ballgame.

Then came the field goal attempt, the block by Benton and the long runback by Gwinn for a touchdown. The long wait was over for North Gaston. They had finally defeated South Point.

North Gaston 14

South Point 10

North Gaston	0	6	0	8	—	14
South Point	10	0	0	0	—	10

SP — Dudko 25 field goal

SP — Young 19 run (Dudko kick)

NG — Benton 59 run (run failed)

NG — Gwinn 75 return of blocked field goal
(Benton run)

Blackburn 18