

Raiders battle past Wildcats

Tailback trio keys victory by South Point

By Dwight Frady

Special To The Gazette

BELMONT — Three South Point tailbacks — and sophomore Willie Strain in particular — made the difference Friday night as the South Point Red Raiders took a crucial 30-21 Southwestern 3-A Conference victory over North Gaston's Wildcats.

The win raised South Point's league mark to 2-1 and pushed the Raiders' overall record to 4-2. North Gaston fell to 1-2 in the SWC and 2-4 overall.

Strain, a punishing runner who also has speed on his side, scored two touchdowns and picked up 147 of his team's 300 yards rushing.

"It was a good win against a good ballclub," said Raider Coach Jim Biggerstaff, whose team won

its first game at home this year. "Strain doesn't play like a sophomore. He had just a super game.

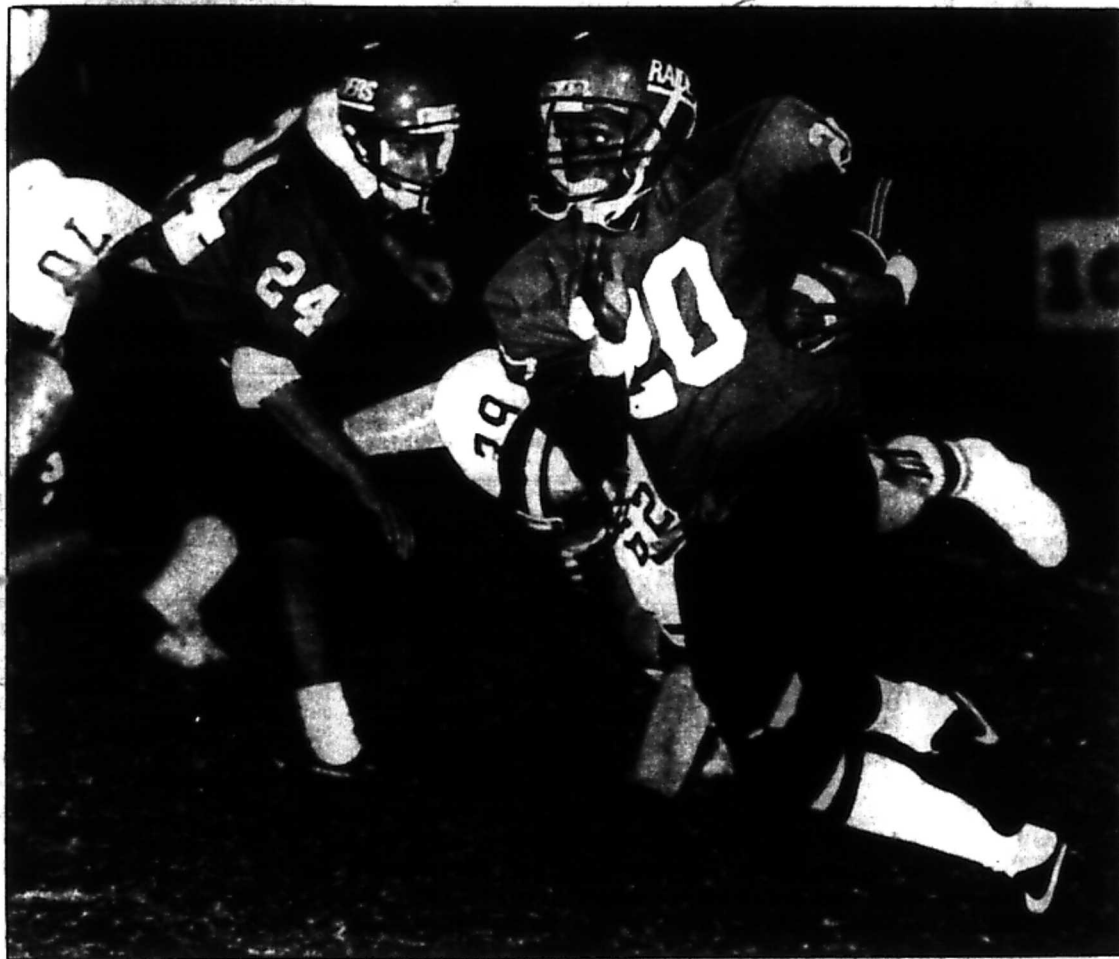
"After the 8-8 halftime score, we would score and they would score. What figured to be a defensive game turned out to be one of offensive bursts. We would always counter when they came back on us."

Coach Bob Patton of North Gaston said his team made too many mistakes — 100 yards in penalties, a lost fumble and an interception — against "a team you can't make mistakes against."

"I was proud of the way our guys fought back, but in the end, we had problems stopping their power running game," Patton said. "They have three of the finest backs in the league.

"We thought we could win right up until the end. It's just that their speed outside and then their crack-back runs against us hurt. They run a strong power game."

Please see RAIDERS/10A



South Point's Scott Floyd (20) scoots past North Gaston's Richie Horne (62).

Mark Dolejs/The Gazette

RAIDERS

FROM 9A

Strain gave South Point the lead in the first 1:33 of the game when he broke loose on a 75-yard run. Quarterback Mike Young hit end Mike Pannell for the two-pointer for a quick 8-0 Raider lead.

But that was destined to be the only Raider score of the first half, and quarterback Johnny McCraw of the Wildcats passed 25 yards to back Clay Hendrix with 1:32 remaining in the half and also hit Hendrix on the two-point conversion for the 8-8 halftime tie.

That touchdown was set up by a shanked punt by Pannell, caused by a low snap and onrushing Wildcats. The ball went out of bounds at the Raider 19, and the touchdown came on a third-and-25 play after the Wildcats had been penalized 15 yards for an illegal block.

McCraw would wind up with two touchdown passes on the night and 120 yards through the air. Ralph Hoke scored the other Wildcat touchdown and wound up with 101 yards rushing in 18 carries.

The Raiders drove 40 yards after a fumble recovery at the 8:58

mark of the third period and scored on a 17-yard run by Brian Pate, another of the South Point tailbacks. Strain kicked the extra point for a 15-8 Raider lead.

The Wildcats came right back, marching 63 yards in 11 plays with Hoke going over from the 1 at the 3:01 mark. McCraw's extra point attempt was wide right, however, leaving South Point with a 15-14 lead.

South Point countered with an 85-yard drive, with Strain going over from the 5 with 10:27 remaining. Scott Floyd, the third tailback who had 90 yards rushing on the

night, went over for the two-point conversion for a 23-14 Raider lead.

The Wildcats then stormed 80 yards in 10 plays, with McCraw hitting Joe Burris on a crucial fourth-down play which covered 18 yards for the score at the 6:36 mark. McCraw's extra-point kick made it 23-21.

Right back came the Raiders, who went 75 yards with Floyd racing the final 35 and Strain booting the extra point to make it 30-21.

North Gaston's chances finally ended when Bobby Nichols intercepted McCraw's pass on the Raider 20 and returned it to mid-field.

North Gaston 21

South Point 30

North Gaston 0 8 6 7 — 21

South Point 8 0 7 15 — 30

SP — Willie Strain 75 run (Mike Pannell pass from Young)

NG — Clay Hendrix 25 pass from Johnny McCraw (Hendrix pass from McCraw)

SP — Brian Pate 17 run (Willie Strain)

NG — Ralph Hoke 1 run (kick failed)

SP — Strain 5 run (Scott Floyd run)

NG — Joe Burris 18 pass from McCraw (McCraw kick)

SP — Floyd 35 run (Strain kick)