

South Point's late surge defeats Mounties, 17-9

By Dwight Frady

Special to The Gazette

KINGS MOUNTAIN — South Point's Red Raiders had been stymied at every turn by a tough Kings Mountain defense here Friday night in a Southwestern 3-A Conference feature.

Trailing again 9-3 with the clock ticking down against them, the Red Raiders were once more the Phoenix rising from the ashes, using lightning to come from behind for the second week in a row with a 17-9 win over the Mountaineers. It was a lot closer than that.

The Raiders, who had scored in the game's final 14 seconds the week before in a 27-21 comeback win at Chase saw Scott Floyd return a punt 75 yards for a touchdown with 8:55 to play to tie the game at 9-9, then strong-legged Willie Strain booted the extra point for a 10-9 South Point lead.

With less than three minutes remaining, the Raiders recovered a Anthony Hillman fumble at the Mountaineer 17 and scored in six plays with Strain going in from 7 yards out.

"We have been coming up with the big play all year," said Coach Jim Biggerstaff of the Red Raiders, whose team moved its SWC record to 4-1 and its overall figure to 6-2 with home games remaining against R-S Central and

Burns. Kings Mountain dropped to 1-4 in the league and 3-5 overall.

"Kings Mountain shut us down," Biggerstaff said. "They held us to fewer yards than any team we've played this year. At the same time, I thought our defense was super in the second half and simply dominating in the fourth period. A real big key was the 32-yard field goal by Strain with less than a minute remaining in the half. That pulled us to within three at 9-3 and really kept us in the game.

"Then Floyd broke his second big punt return for us this year. He can really fly and he made a real nice run once he got past the first wave of defenders. I can't say enough about this team. We can be down — but we are never out."

Coach Denny Hicks of the Mountaineers pointed to squandered opportunities by his team in the first half, and then once again late in the third period.

"We had our chances but we just self-destructed all night with turnovers and penalties," Hicks said.

Kings Mountain muffed a chance right after the opening kickoff when Jody Champion recovered Pat Keough's fumble at the Raider 24. But South Point held at the 20.

On its third possession, Kings Mountain scored its only

touchdown on a 57-yard drive in eight plays, climaxed by David Ledbetter's 1-yard plunge at the 11:19 mark of the second period and Todd McDaniel's extra point.

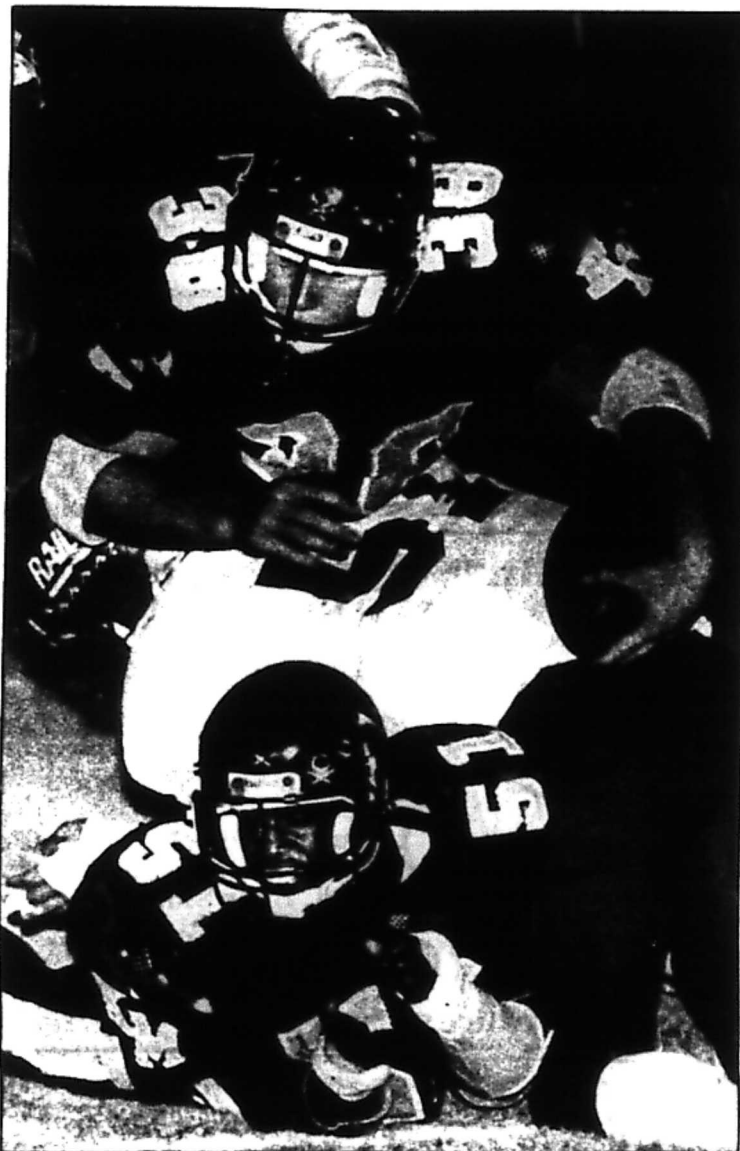
Mark Crawford two plays after the ensuing kickoff intercepted a Mike Young pass at the Raider 44 and returned it to the 12 for a first and 10. On third down from the 8, however, Brian Pate made one of his two key interceptions on the night (the Mountaineers had six turnovers, five in the first half), intercepting Ryan Hollifield in the end zone.

Shortly thereafter, Young was tackled in the end zone for a safety for a 9-0 Mountaineer lead.

After the kickoff, the Mountaineers, in two plays, had the ball on the Red Raider 24 for a first and-10 situation. But Hillman fumbled and the Raiders recovered at the 26.

With 3:12 remaining in the half, Pate intercepted Hollifield again at the Raider 36 and returned it to the Mountaineer 46. With less than a minute remaining in the half, Strain kicked his 32-yard field goal to make it 9-3 at intermission.

The Mountaineers' last real scoring chance came when they moved from their 15 for a first and 10 at the Raider 17 late in the third period. On fourth and 15, McDaniel's 40-yard field goal was short.



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Mountie David Ledbetter (38) scores in the second quarter.

South Point 17

Kings Mountain 9

South Point 0 3 0 14 — 17

Kings Mountain 0 9 0 0 — 9

KM — David Ledbetter 1 run (Todd McDaniel kick)

KM — Safety, Mike Young tackled in end zone

SP — Willie Strain 32 field goal

SP — Scott Floyd 75 punt return (Strain kick)

SP — Strain 7 run (Strain kick)

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