

Raiders topple Burns

By Dwight Frady

Special to The Gazette

BELMONT — South Point's Red Raiders are caught up in a football season in which dreams are coming true.

Helpless and hapless a year ago with an 0-10 record, South Point has completed a regular season which none of the experts could have ever predicted, blasting the Burns Bulldogs 31-15 here Friday night to finish at 6-1 in the Southwestern 3-A Conference and 8-2 overall.

South Point advances into the playoffs as one of the hottest items in the prep ranks, meeting Canton Pisgah, the number two seed from the Mountain Athletic Conference, next Friday at Canton.

The Red Raiders used an awesome offense against one of the league's best defensive teams and came up with the big defensive plays to eliminate Burns from the playoff picture.

South Point's tailback trio of Brian Pate, Willie Strain and Scott Floyd rushed for 289 yards between them as the Raiders totaled 355 yards in total offense.

"This was a great, great win," Biggerstaff said. "We're just unbelievably happy about the way we played and the way good things have happened to a bunch of super kids this season.

"This has been a joyous season for our players, our coaching staff and our loyal fans. It's pure pleasure just to go out and practice. Last year it was a misery for us all. We are looking forward to the playoffs."

Floyd, South Point's "super fly," broke another long one on the game's opening play, taking the kickoff on his 11 and racing 89 yards with only 11 seconds having elapsed off the clock. Willie Strain booted the first of his two extra points and the Raiders never trailed thereafter.

South Point marched 71 yards in eight plays at the 3:20 mark of the second period as Strain went over on a 1-yard run and Mike Young hit Mike Pannell on a two-point conversion for a 15-0 lead.

Burns closed the gap to 15-8 just before the half on an 86-yard drive in 7 plays, with Danny Ross scoring on a 2-yard run and Tim Gilbert passing to Gary Washington for the two-point conversion.

Pannell, one of four different Raiders to intercept passes on the night, thwarted a Burns drive early in the third period when he intercepted a Gilbert pass at the Raider 15 and ran it back 65 yards to the Burns 20. After a penalty on the play to the Bulldog 10, Strain went over from that point at the 8:36 mark for a 21-8 Raider lead.

Burns came right back, going 73 yards in just four plays to cut the margin to 21-15, Ross going over from the 3 at the 6:23 mark.

But South Point scored 10 unanswered points in the fourth period, dominating play and getting a 27-yard field goal from Strain with 9:09 left and a 25-yard pass interception and touchdown return from Pat Keough with 2:58 left.

Burns' Gilbert hit on 10 of 21 passes for 170 yards, with Washington catching six of them for 90 yards. Burns finished at 4-3 in the league and 7-3 overall.

Canton Pisgah, South Point's first playoff foe, finished at 3-7 on the season, falling to Waynesville Tuscola 28-13 Friday night.

Burns 15

South Point 31

Burns 0 8 7 0—15

South Point 7 8 6 10—31

SP — Scott Floyd 89 kickoff return (Willie Strain kick).

SP — Willie Strain 1 run (Mike Pannell pass from Mike Young).

B — Danny Ross 3 run (Gary Washington pass from Tim Gilbert).

SP — Strain 2 run (kick failed).

SP — Strain 27 FG.

SP — Pat Keough 25 pass interception (Strain kick).