



Jeff Melton/The Gazette

South Point's Willie Strain (43) is tripped up by a pair of Kings Mountain tacklers.

Strain, defense key Raiders' win

From staff reports

BELMONT — It was Willie Strain's moment.

With Kings Mountain and South Point locked up in a 7-7 tie Friday night, the Raiders' junior running back finally got through a tough Mountaineer offense and raced 75 yards with 5:56 remaining in the game to do two things.

His touchdown run put his team up, 14-7. It also pushed the Raider tailback over the 1,000-yard mark on the season.

With time running out, a Kings Mountain fourth-down pass from

the Mountie 17 was incomplete. On the next play, Strain ran 17 yards to put the game out of reach.

Until Strain dialed long distance, Kings Mountain had shut down the Raider offense. The turning point came when the Mountaineers drove from their 37 to the South Point 9 for a first and goal with the game deadlocked at 7-7 in the fourth period.

But a penalty and two Hollifield incompletions left it up to Todd McDaniel's 27-yard field goal attempt. The ball never got placed on the tee properly as Strain rush-

ed the kicker. The ball was topped, Robert McNeil picked it out of the air at the 5, and returned it to the Raider 21.

On a third and six from the 25, Strain broke loose for the winning score.

It was a crucial Southwestern 3-A Conference game. It moved South Point to 3-2 in the league and 3-4-1 overall, and dropped the Mounties to 2-3 and 4-4 with two league games remaining for both teams.

"Defense was the key," said Raider coach Jim Biggerstaff. "It

has been the key for us lately. A very good Kings Mountain defense had throttled us all night until Willie broke the big one. What a year he has had for us. This still keeps our playoff hopes alive."

"We sure had our chances," Kings Mountain coach Dennis Hicks said. "To be a winner, you've got to take advantage of opportunities. We had some golden opportunities to score and we didn't."

Kings Mountain had a first and goal at the Raider 7 following a 37-

Please see RAIDERS/2C

RAIDERS

FROM 1C

yard pass from Hollifield to Brian Ramsey in the first period. But South Point held and McDaniel's 26-yard field goal attempt was wide left.

Shortly thereafter, the Mountaineers blocked a Mike Young punt and recovered on the Raider 14. Two plays later, the Mounties fumbled it right back when Victor Bell lost the handle at the 8.

South Point obliged by giving it right back at the 7 when Jamie Boyd's fumble was recovered by Jeff Lockhart. On third and goal from the 4, a Hollifield to Bell pitchout went awry and the Raiders

recovered the ball at the 16.

Finally, on their fourth try from inside the 10, the Mountaineers took a 7-0 lead with only 50 seconds left in the first half. They marched 56 yards in 18 plays. With first and goal at the Raider 3, it took four carries before Lockhart went in from the 1 on fourth down. McDaniel's extra point made it 7-0 at the half.

In the third period, the Raiders got a gift when the defense scored a touchdown. Bell's fumble at the 12 rolled into the end zone, where defensive back Troy Sharpe fell on the ball at the 3:29 mark. Strain's extra point made it 7-7.

That's when Kings Mountain drove downfield for the attempted

field goal.

"They (Kings Mountain) had possession of the ball for most of the night," Biggerstaff said. "But in the end, our defense saved us. Our defense gets the credit."

The Mountaineers had six turnovers on two fumbles and two pass interceptions. They were also penalized 110 yards on nine infractions. Offensively, Kings Mountain finished with 207 total yards to 163 for South Point. Hollifield hit on five of 16 passes for 125 yards.

Strain finished with 140 yards in 19 carries and has 1,028 yards rushing on the season. His two touchdowns gives him 13 on the season.

Kings Mountain 7

South Point 21

Kings Mountain 0 7 0 0 — 7

South Point 0 0 7 14 — 21

KM — Jeff Lockhart 1 run (Todd McDaniel kick)

SP — Troy Sharpe fumble recovery in end zone (Willie Strain kick)

SP — Strain 15 run (Jamie Boyd kick)

SP — Strain 17 run (Boyd kick)