



John Clark/The Gazette

Derek Bowens of South Point falls forward for extra yardage against Kings Mountain on Friday night.

Raiders take over league lead

South Point tops Kings Mountain on late score

By Dean Lowman
Gazette Prep Editor

BELMONT — Gerard Hardy vaulted South Point into sole possession of first place in the Southwestern 3-A football race Friday night.

Hardy's 1-yard dive with five seconds to play lifted South Point to a 14-12 win over visiting Kings Mountain. But the Red Raiders had to wait to be sure.

"My guys said he didn't get in," said Kings Mountain coach Dennis Hicks.

But the referees, after hesitating to make the immediate call and announcing their decision after a short conference,

disagreed.

Coupled with Burns' 24-14 loss to East Rutherford, the decision left South Point atop the SWC standings at 3-0 in league play and 5-2 overall. Kings Mountain drops to 1-1 and 2-4.

"Tonight was a struggle — it was a gut-check struggle," said South Point coach Phil Tate. "Probably if they would have had the ball the last four minutes, they would have whipped us."

As it was, the Mountaineers pushed South Point to the limit.

A blocked punt by Kasey Holland, who later scored on a 6-yard run, gave the Mountaineers a 6-0 lead less than three minutes into the game.

They held that edge until the third quarter when Hardy tossed a 22-yard TD pass to Randy Brown and Ryan Werner added the PAT, giving the Red Raiders a 7-6 lead.

But the Mountaineers, who managed just five first downs in the game, roared to life midway through the fourth quarter to regain the lead.

A 25-yard dash by Diron Bell, then an 11-yard pass from Jerry Black to Sheldon Thompson moved the ball to the Red Raider 15.

Bell, who finished with 106 yards on 15 carries, then dashed around right end for a touchdown, giving the Mounties a 12-7 edge with 4:28 left.

"I got them together and told them we have got to have a big kickoff return," said Tate. "And we got it."

Rachon Stowe grabbed Sirihama Rithiphong's kickoff at his own 13, found a seam at the Raiders' 30 and roared up the home sideline, finally getting knocked out of bounds at the Mountaineer 35.

The Red Raiders then ground

out the victory, preserving the drive when Hardy kept the ball around left end for a 4-yard gain on fourth-and-2, moving the ball to the 23.

T.O. Wilson bulled the ball up the middle eight yards to the 6 for a first-and-goal, with a 2-yard bootleg by Hardy and an encroachment call against the Mounties moving the ball to the 2.

As the clock wound down, Hardy gained one yard on a quarterback sneak, setting up his last-second heroics.

"Our kids played their hearts out," said Hicks. "They played well enough and did what they had to do to win. They just never really got going."

Kings Mountain 6 0 0 6 — 12
South Point 0 0 7 7 — 14
KM — Kasey Holland 6 run (kick failed)
SP — Randy Brown 22 pass from Gerard Hardy (Ryan Werner kick)
KM — Diron Bell 15 run (run failed)
SP — Hardy 1 run (Werner kick)