

# Hear them roar

## North Gaston beats Raiders for first time since 1986

By Mike Nixon

Gazette Correspondent

DALLAS — For more than a decade, North Gaston fans couldn't talk about that victory over South Point the year before.

That's because it hadn't happened since 1986.

But this year's Wildcats put a stop to that streak Friday night with a 21-14 come-from-behind Homecoming win over the Red Raiders in a key battle for playoff position in the Southwestern 3A conference.

"We finally got the monkey off our back," North Gaston coach Mike Briggs said of the losing streak against the Raiders. "It's been a while."

With South Point's defense shutting down North Gaston's potent rushing attack for much of the game, the Wildcats had to rely on the passing of Adrian Grier to score points. Grier responded, connecting on 7-of-11 passes for 153 yards and two scores.

The game began with a scoring flurry, as each team scored quickly the first time they touched the ball.

South Point (4-3, 0-1) struck first, as Jeremy Jackson broke free for a 76-yard scoring run on the Raiders' first series.

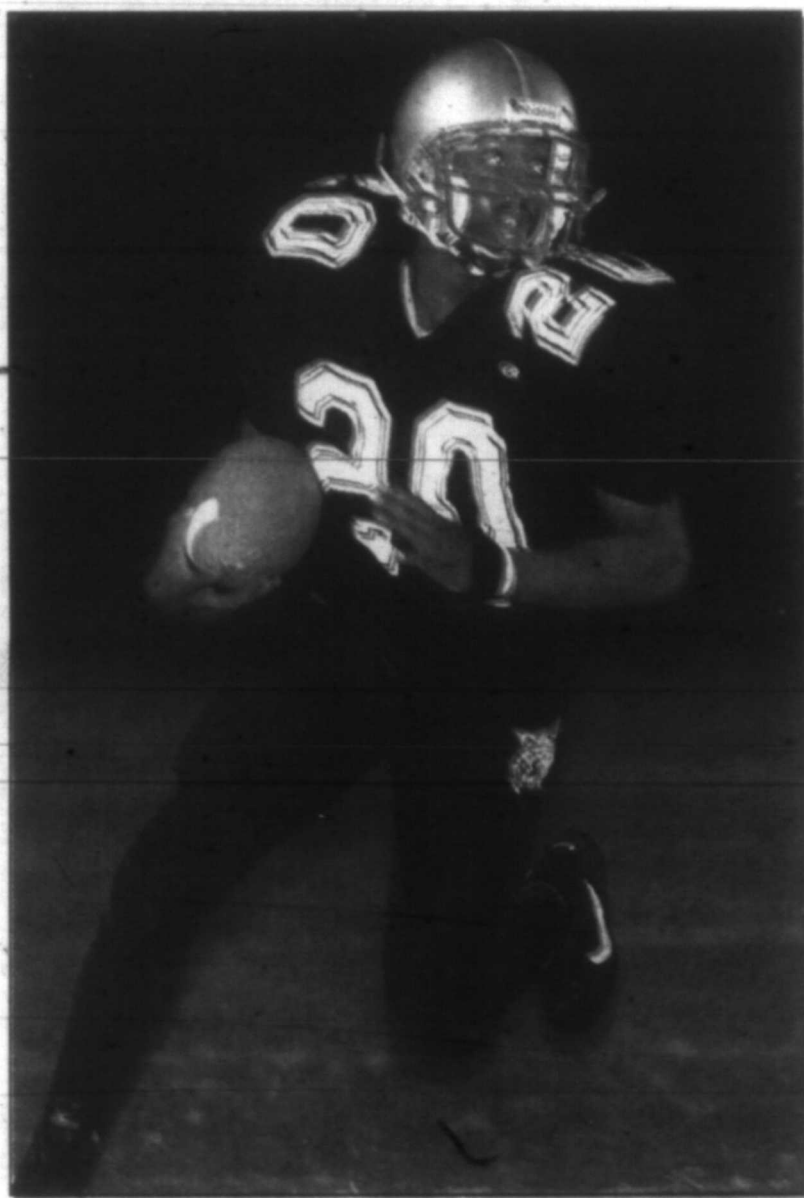
North Gaston answered three plays later on an 80-yard touchdown pass from Grier to Randy Thompson, and the score was 7-7 just three minutes into the game.

Thompson scored the Wildcats' next touchdown as well, this time on defense. He picked off a third-and-7 pass attempt by South Point's Devon Lowery and returned it 64 yards to make it 13-7 North Gaston.

Jackson answered for the Raiders on the first play of the second quarter, capping a seven-play, 70-yard drive with a 46-yard run to give South Point a 14-13 lead at halftime.

It was the last time a Raider would see the end zone, as North Gaston's defense held South Point to just 76 yards of offense in the second half.

"We challenged our guys at halftime



Mike Hensdill/The Gazette

**North Gaston's Josh Butler looks for room to run against South Point.**

to play harder," Briggs said. "Our offensive line wasn't playing as well as it could, and they came out in the second half and made the difference. It was smash-mouth, physical football."

Indeed, North Gaston (6-1, 1-0) began its final scoring drive with three minutes left in the third quarter. Starting from their own 30, the Wildcats trio of Thompson, Josh Butler and Laramie Watson each ripped off runs of 10 or more yards over the next eight plays, reaching the South Point 12-yard line.

Then on second-and-7 from the 9, Grier rolled to his right and found Watson all alone in the end zone for the go-

ahead score.

While the win was important for the Wildcats, it was the way they got it that impressed Briggs the most.

"Down by seven early in the game. Down by one at the half. It would have been easy for us to call it quits," Briggs said. "But that's the difference between this year and years past. These guys will fight you to the end."

South Point, after holding North Gaston to just one first down before halftime, simply couldn't find a big play when it needed one. Jeremy Jackson (174 yards rushing) provided the bulk of the

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Raiders' offense.

"You've got to give credit to North Gaston," said coach John Devine. "They played hard-nosed football. We just didn't get the job

done in the second half when we needed to."

South Point 7 7 0 0 — 14

North Gaston 13 0 0 8 — 21

SP— Jeremmy Jackson 76 run (Philliph Wright kick)

NG— Randy Thompson 80 pass from Adrian Grier (Brent Slentz kick)

NG—Thompson 64 INT return (kick failed)

SP— Jackson 46 run (Wright kick)

NG— Laramey Watson 9 pass from Grier (Josh Butler to Matt Ratchford pass good)