

South Point takes care of Concord

By PHILLIP GARDNER

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BELMONT — Gaston County received some much-needed rain Friday night, and South Point made it look as if they planned it that way.

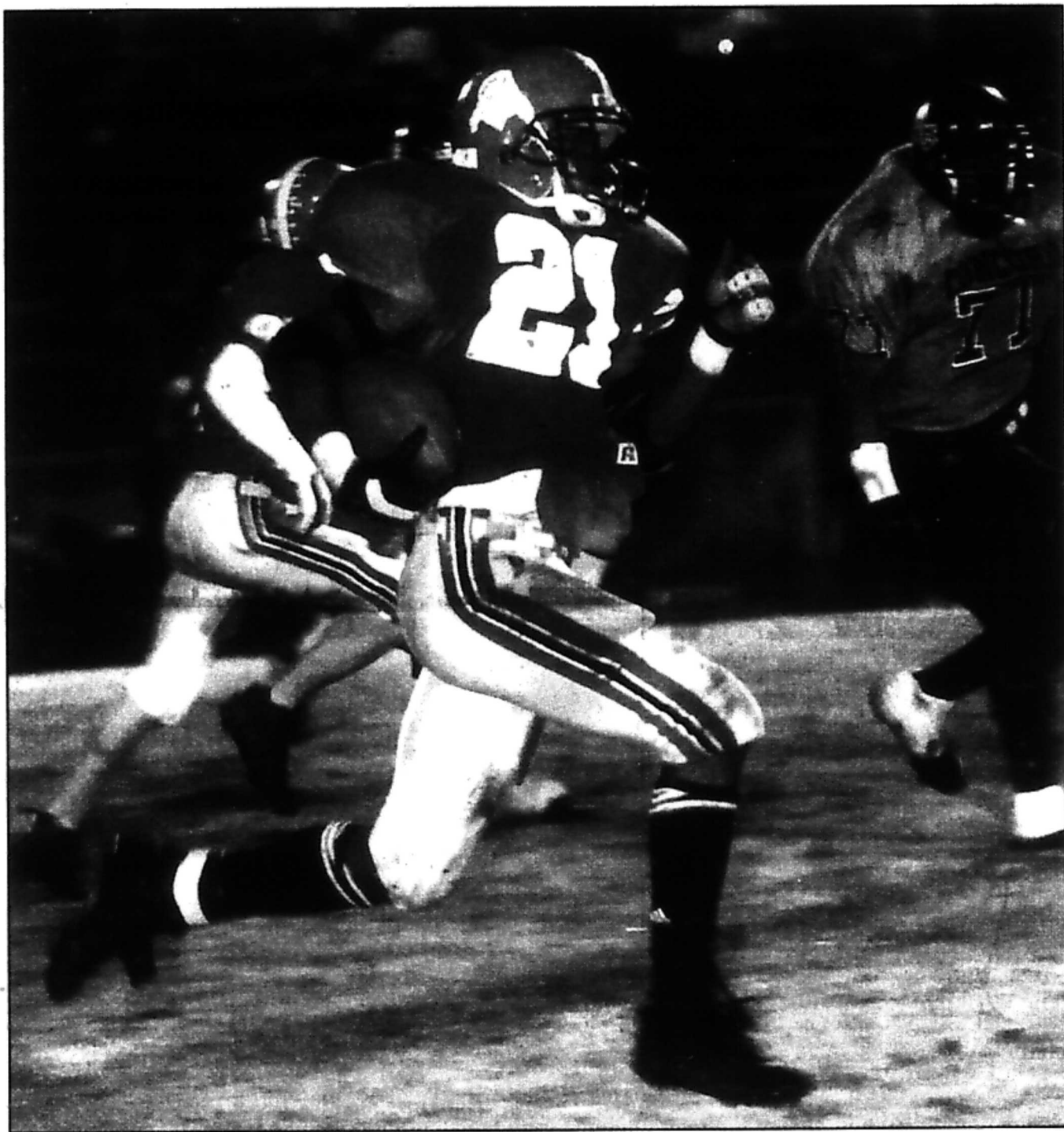
In a steady downpour, the Red Raiders took advantage of five Concord turnovers to defeat the visiting Spiders 26-13 at Lineberger Stadium Friday night and advance to the second round of the playoffs for the third consecutive year.

Pelted by raindrops for the entire game, both teams suffered from sloppy ball handling, combining for 13 fumbles — six lost. But 11th-seeded Concord hurt itself the most, fumbling away the ball on three of their last six possessions.

Sophomore middle linebacker Brian Bradshaw pounced on two Concord fumbles as part of a monster defensive performance in only his second appearance since moving up from the junior varsity squad to replace the injured Dustin Lyerly.

"We were just trying to hit them hard and make them cough up the ball and get

South Point, Lincolnton advance



Dexter Pepperman/The Gazette

Phillip Stowe gallops 78 yards past the Concord defense for South Point's first touchdown of the game Friday night during the Raiders' 26-13 win. Stowe recovered from a nagging ankle injury to lead South Point with 132 yards rushing.

▼ Raiders

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on it," Bradshaw said.

The sixth-seeded Red Raiders will travel to play third-seeded and undefeated Piedmont (12-0) which rallied to knock off East Lincoln 35-20 Friday night.

South Point defeated Concord in the first round of last year's playoffs, 28-13.

Concord (7-5) made it look easy Friday in taking an early 7-0 lead less than three minutes into the game only to see the Red Raiders (7-5) score 26 of the game's last 32 points.

"The kids have got a lot of character," South Point head coach John Devine said. "It's very easy to fold up as easy as they scored the first time. This is a resilient crowd. They played as hard as they can. They're not afraid of anybody. Sometimes they make mistakes but a lot of times they make big plays and tonight was a big play game."

The outcome was still in doubt until a bizarre 40-yard touchdown run by Rasharde Reid with 7:57 left in the game sealed the victory for South Point. The play almost appeared dead after Reid was seemingly stopped for a gain of several yards, but the senior fullback emerged from a pile of defenders and scampered the rest of the way untouched to make it 24-13.

"I didn't hear a whistle blow and I could see the referee in front of me," Reid said. "He just had a whistle in his hand so he didn't blow anything so I just thought the play was alive and got up and ran. I was on top of somebody."

Reid finished with 101 yards and two touchdowns on 19 carries. Running back Phillip Stowe led the Red Raiders with 132 rushing yards and a touchdown on 12 touches.

Concord running back Franswa Sumlin was as slippery as the ball, turning 21 carries into 185 yards and a touchdown. However, outside of Sumlin, Concord managed little offensive production.

"Franswa has done a great job for us all year and ended up with over 1,000 yards and it's a tribute to him," Concord head coach E.Z. Smith III said. "He played hard and our line blocked hard."

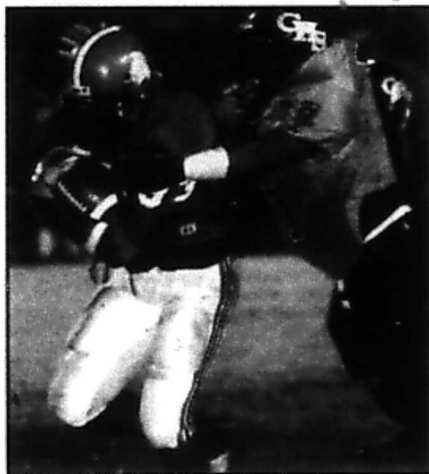
Concord lost four of seven fumbles and also threw an interception.

"You want to blame the rain and you want to blame mishandled snaps and you want to blame aggressive play and you want to blame everything. But the bottom line is (South Point) had to play (in the rain) too," Smith said.

Concord took charge early, taking the game-opening possession 74 yards in only six plays for a 2-yard touchdown run by Sumlin.

But after trading punts, South Point seemed to seize the momentum with a 78-yard touchdown run by Phillip Stowe, who was close to full strength after recovering from a nagging ankle injury. B.J. Richmond's kick made it 7-7 with 3:38 left in the first quarter.

"When a team scores that easy that early and then to come back and Phillip Stowe just light that thing up and tie the score, that was a big play," Devine said. "It gave us the little bit of self confi-



Dexter Pepperman/The Gazette

South Point's Rasharde Reid ran for 101 yards and two touchdowns, including this jaunt for a score in the first quarter.

dence. Phillip's being doing that for us, and today he was healthy and you saw a little bit of that breakaway-type speed that we've been missing."

Two Concord possessions later, the Spiders were pinned on their own 7-yard line after a 45-yard punt by Richmond. The Red Raiders defense took advantage, dropping Concord for two losses before Joe Costner and Jordy Rice tackled Sumlin in the end zone on a third-and-15 play for a safety.

Stowe then returned the free kick 35 yards all the way to the Concord 23. All it took from there was two Rasharde Reid runs to give the Red Raiders another touchdown and a 15-7 lead.

South Point quarterback Javar Williams later had a pass intercepted by Concord's Matt Cole. Sumlin carried on the next play 29 yards all the way to the South Point 1, but a fumble on the next play kept the Spiders from scoring and closing the gap.

Richmond attempted a 51-yard field goal as time expired in the first half, but the kick fell short and wide left, leaving the Red Raiders with a 15-7 halftime lead.

South Point took the second-half's opening kickoff and turned the possession into a 31-yard field goal by Richmond.

Concord later closed the gap to 18-13 on a 1-yard bootleg run by quarterback Arion Almond with 6:15 left in the game.

However, South Point answered with Reid's 40-yard touchdown on the ensuing drive.

"We had a good game plan. We just made some mistakes," Smith said. "We felt like we had them shut down pretty good after we took it down there (on the first touchdown) and then they break the option and we're in position to make the play. We just don't make the plays. And they make them. They did a better job there at the end than we did."

C 7 0 0 6 — 13

SP 7 8 3 8 — 26

C — Franswa Sumlin 2 run (Drew Walters kick)

SP — Phillip Stowe 78 run (B.J. Richmond kick)

SP — Safety. Sumlin tackled in end zone

SP — Rasharde Reid 11 run (kick blocked)

SP — Richmond 31 FG

C — Arion Almon 1 run (run failed)

SP — Reid 40 run (Tyler Gorton run)