



Jessica Webb/The Gazette

The South Point defense takes down East Lincoln's T.J. Smith during the first half of Friday night's game.

# Raiders clinch title

Raiders cap off perhaps most impressive conference title run ever

By RICHARD WALKER  
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DENVER — South Point High football players, coaches and supporters all held four fingers in the air as they celebrated in East Lincoln's David Clark Stadium after a 28-7 victory Friday over the home-standing Mustangs.

The Red Raiders were signifying their fourth straight conference championship in school history.

It was perhaps the school's most impressive of the nine league titles South Point has won in its 34-year history.

Not only did the Red Raiders roll to an unbeaten, untied conference mark for the seventh time in school history, but South Point trailed only briefly in two league games and rolled up an impressive 195-39 point differential in six Big South 3A Conference games this season.

"A conference championship and homefield advantage was what this game was about," said Red Raiders junior quarterback Javar Williams, whose team doesn't find out its playoff future until pairings are released at approximately 6 tonight by the NCHSAA. "We feel that if we play our game, nobody can beat us."

East Lincoln would certainly agree after South Point rolled in finishing its regular season at 9-1.

The Mustangs (7-4, 4-2) made three costly mistakes in the opening half.

Not only did the Red Raiders take advantage, but

they took control of the game in doing so.

On the opening series, East Lincoln appeared to have South Point's powerful offense stopped near midfield after allowing one first down.

But a holding penalty at the line of scrimmage on a fourth-and-nine punt gave the Red Raiders a first down at the Mustangs 38.

Seven plays later, Williams kept the ball on the option right from 1 yard out for the game's first touchdown.

The next South Point series, East Lincoln again forced a punt after one first down.

But this time, the Mustangs fumbled the return to give the Red Raiders possession at the East Lincoln 21.

And while the Mustangs defense forced South Point to give up the ball on downs — and after a touchdown pass was nullified by a motion penalty — the extra plays meant the Red Raiders controlled possession for 25 of the game's first 33 plays.

East Lincoln was back on defense again after another turnover — a diving interception by Jonathan Mitchell after the Mustangs had reached the Red Raiders 43.

South Point halfback Joe Brown then carried five times for 67 yards in a nine-play, 81-yard drive, including a 5-yard TD run. Andrew Rinehart's second of four extra points made it 14-0 at the half.

The Red Raiders tacked on two more scores in the second half — one each by Williams and Brown — to go ahead 28-0

with 8:27 to play.

East Lincoln got on the scoreboard — and snapped South Point's scoreless streak at 11 quarters — on Dennis Hickman's 23-yard scoring pass to Grant Covington with 2:15 to play.

Williams directed a 325-yard offensive attack, picking up 113 yards rushing and 31 passing. Brown finished with 153 yards on 24 carries.

"Javar really came alive running the option," South Point coach John Devine said. "He's a threat for us out there. He wasn't really a threat earlier in the year. But he's a threat now."

East Lincoln was led by Andre Tinsley's 146 yards in 26 carries and Hickman's 118 yards passing.

The victory could prove costly to South Point, as ace defensive back and special teams player Brandon Reid suffered a sprained knee ligament returning a punt in the first quarter.

Reid did not return after his left knee was iced and he was placed in a soft leg brace. Devine said Reid will be evaluated by doctors again early next week to determine his condition and prospect of playing in the postseason.

SP 7777-28  
EL 0007-7

SP — Javar Williams 1 run (Andrew Rinehart kick)  
SP — Joe Brown 5 run (Rinehart kick)  
SP — Williams 20 run (Rinehart kick)  
SP — Brown 1 run (Rinehart kick)  
EL — Grant Covington 23 pass from Dennis Hickman (Ellis Dunston kick)