

Code Red

With playoffs on line, Williams delivers

South Point overcomes 10-point deficit in second half, advances

By PHILLIP GARDNER
Gazette Sports Reporter

BELMONT — With his team trailing by four points early in the fourth quarter, South Point's Javar Williams decided to take matters into his own hands.

The junior quarterback orchestrated a brilliant scoring drive to give the Red

SOUTH POINT	37	Raiders their first
FRANKLIN	27	lead of the game
		with 9:17 remain-
		ing and later
		scored the back-

breaker as South Point secured a 37-27 playoff win over Franklin here at Lineberger Stadium.

The second-round victory launches the Red Raiders (11-1) to the 3A state quarterfinals, where they will face Mooresville, a 27-21 winner over Ragsdale.

South Point's go-ahead touchdown drive early in the fourth quarter covered 89 yards and included a 55-yard run by Williams, who made several tackle-breaking spin moves to give the Red Raiders excellent scoring position at the Franklin 23-yard line.

Two plays later, Williams ran for a 12-yard gain to set up Brian McWhirter's 13-yard scoring run. Andrew Rinehart's point-after-touchdown kick gave the Red



Jessica Webb/The Gazette

Red Raiders coach John Devine talks with Jeremiah Riddle on the sideline after Franklin's first touchdown of the game Friday night.

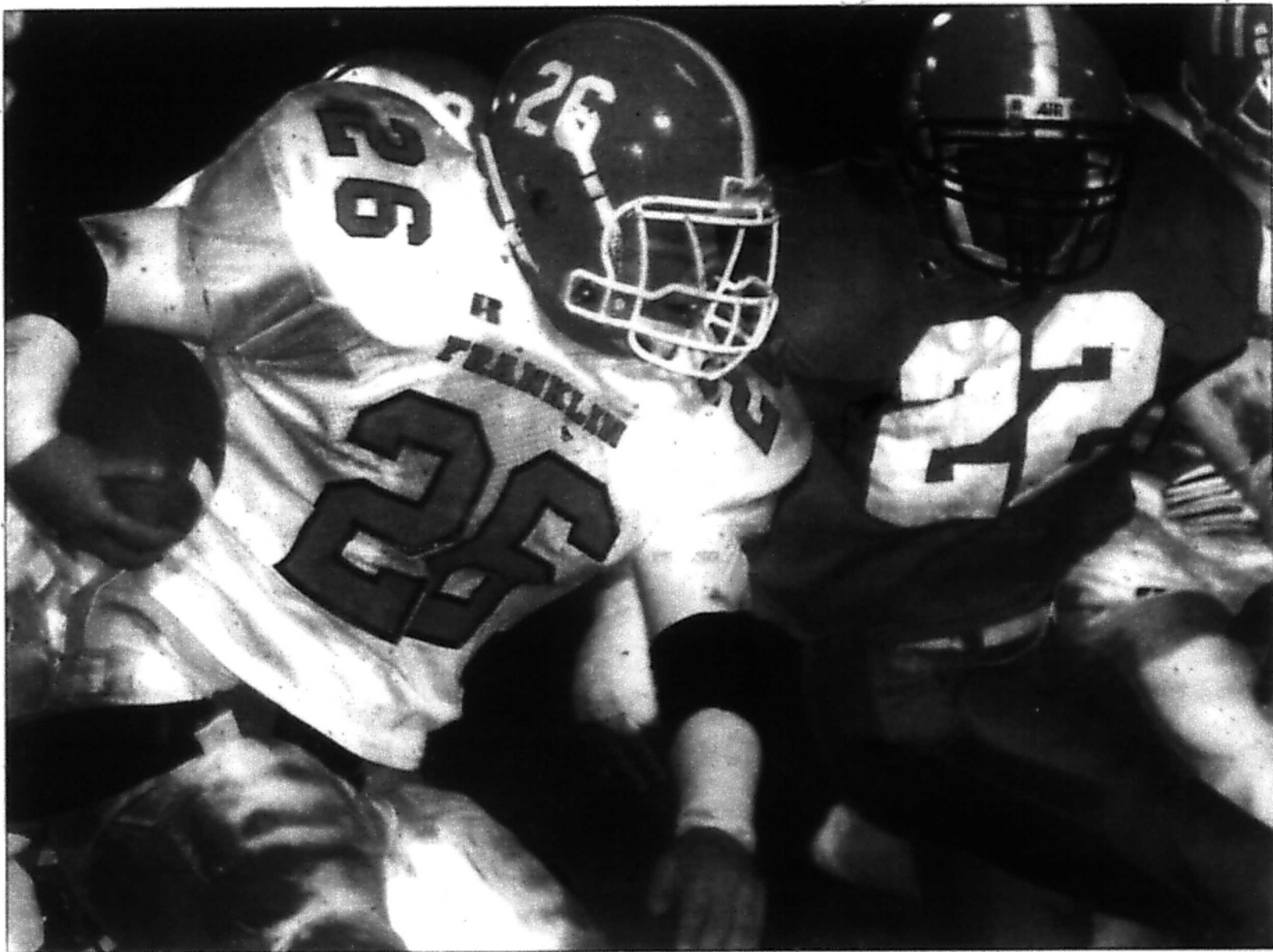
Raiders a 23-20 lead.

After Franklin unsuccessfully tried a fake punt on its ensuing possession, the Red Raiders took over at the Panther 17-yard line.

Williams needed only two carries to reach the end zone and give South Point an insurmountable 30-20 lead with 7:45 remaining.

"Javar Williams has turned into an all-state player," South Point coach John Devine said. "He is a tremendous talent. He took control of that game. When we had to have it and we needed a play, he wanted the ball."

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS



Jessica Webb/The Gazette

South Point's John Alexander (22) moves in to tackle Franklin's Chris Durm during the first half of Friday night's 3A state playoff game in Belmont. The third-seeded Red Raiders won 37-27. South Point advances to take on Mooresville in the state quarterfinals Friday at home.

"That's all you can ask of a quarterback."

Williams finished with 115 yards and a touchdown on 24 carries. He also completed 6 of 7 passes for 95 yards and an interception.

But as well as Williams played down the stretch, Franklin (11-2) still had a chance to win late in the game.

In fact, it was Williams who fumbled on South Point's own 25-yard line at the 3:07 mark to give Franklin a chance.

Five plays later, Franklin scored on an 8-yard pass from Clay Wyatt to Dustin Penland. It was the second time Wyatt connected with Penland for a touchdown, and this one cut South Point's lead to 30-27 with 2:48 on the clock.

But Franklin's onside kick attempt didn't travel the 10 yards necessary for the Panthers to recover the ball, and South Point took possession at the Franklin 48.

The Red Raiders needed only one play to end the night on a dramatic note as junior fullback Joe Brown burst up the middle and covered all 48 yards for his third touchdown of the night.

"If it got any more exciting, I don't know if I could have stood it," Devine said. "I'm telling you, it was a great effort. Tremendous character. We talked about being behind, not giving up. We talked about the character it takes to win a championship, and you saw some of that tonight."

South Point, making its fourth consecutive appearance in the second round of the state playoffs, trailed by as many as 10 in the second half before mounting the late comeback.

Franklin took advantage of several big plays to build a 14-3 lead in the second quarter. The Panthers opened the scoring on a 78-yard pass from Wyatt to Penland.

They struck again when a 37-yard run by Josh Durm set up a 14-yard scoring pass from Wyatt to Brandon Church. That gave the Panthers a 14-3 lead with 7:33 left in the second quarter.

South Point closed the gap just before halftime when Williams completed three consecutive passes to set up a 1-



Jessica Webb/The Gazette

South Point's Tyler Gorton avoids a tackle by Franklin's Matt Myers during the first half of Friday's game in Belmont.

yard touchdown run by Joe Brown. Franklin led 14-10 at the break.

Franklin capitalized on a South Point mistake in the third quarter to extend its lead to 10. Williams made a low pitch to Tyler Gorton deep in South Point territory. Franklin's Kyle Ledford recovered the loose ball in the end zone to give the Panthers a 20-10 lead with 9:47 remaining in the third.

After South Point scored on a 27-yard Brown run to make the score 20-16, Franklin threatened to extend its lead to start the fourth quarter.

But the Panthers' drive stalled on the South Point 10 when Jeremiah Riddle intercepted a Wyatt pass at the goal line and returned it 11 yards.

Williams then led the Red Raiders on their go-ahead drive.

"It's hard," Franklin coach Fred Goldsmith said. "About two-thirds of this game we had it under control. We had a real good opponent. They were well coached, a class team and stayed right in there. They didn't give up, and when we made mistakes, they capitalized."

South Point rolled up 428 yards of total offense despite four turnovers. Franklin produced 340 yards of total offense.

Brown, the area's leading rusher and scorer, finished with 86 yards and three touchdowns on eight carries. Brian

McWhirter carried 12 times for 92 yards and a touchdown.

Chris Durm led the Panthers with 93 yards on 11 carries. His brother, Josh Durm, added 86 yards on 17 carries. Wyatt was 11 of 31 passing with one interception and 191 yards. Penland finished with five receptions for 127 yards and two scores.

F	7	7	6	7	27
SP	0	10	6	21	37

F — Dustin Penland 78 pass from Clay Wyatt (Kyle Garner kick)
 SP — FG Andrew Rinehart 27
 F — Brandon Church 14 pass from Wyatt (Garner kick)
 SP — Joe Brown 1 run (Rinehart kick)
 F — Kyle Ledford fumble recovery in end zone (Garner kick failed)
 SP — Brown 27 run (Rinehart kick failed)
 SP — Brian McWhirter 13 run (Rinehart kick)
 SP — Javar Williams 8 run (Rinehart kick)
 F — Penland 8 pass from Wyatt (Garner kick)
 SP — Brown 48 run (Rinehart kick)

	F	SP
First downs	14	17
Rushes-yards	33-149	50-333
Passing yards	191	95
Comp-attempt	11-31	6-7
Fumbles-lost	2-1	5-3
Penalties-yards	3-20	2-7

Individual statistics

Rushing — F: Chris Durm 11-93, Josh Durm 17-86, Ben Savaiko 1-1, Brandon Church 1-0, Clay Wyatt 3-31, SP: Javar Williams 24-115, Brian McWhirter 12-92, Joe Brown 8-86, Tyler Gorton 6-40.
Passing — F: Wyatt 11-31-1, 191 SP: Williams 6-7-1, 95.
Receiving — F: Dustin Penland 5-127, Zac Mason 3-42, Brandon Church 2-19, Chris Durm 1-3, SP: Brooks Drennan 2-47, Wade Harris 2-31, Jimmy Dixon 2-17.