

Raiders not stuck on 13 this year

South Point turns back Mooresville, will play 14th game this season

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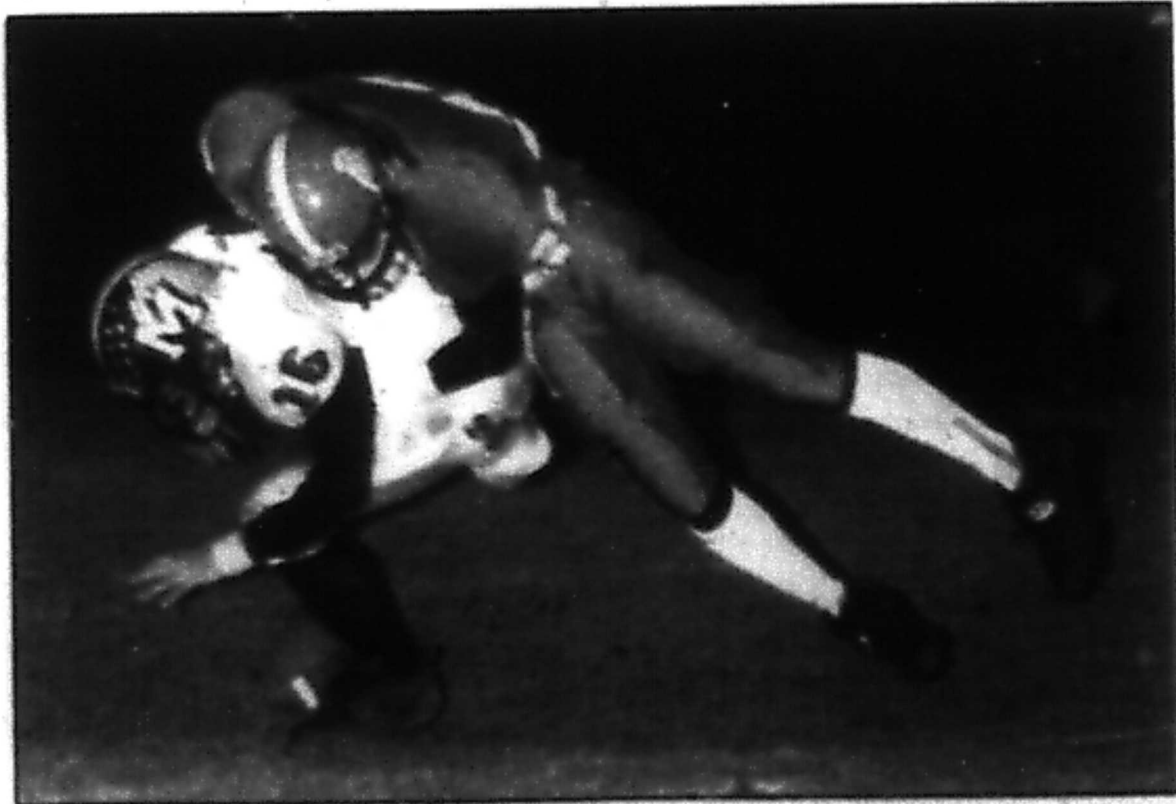
BELMONT — For years, it seems, South Point had a cap placed on its season at 13 games

Not this year

Not after a determined defense and an efficient offense led the Red Raiders into the Western N.C. Class 3A finals with a 12-10 victory over Mooresville in front of an overflow crowd Friday night at chilly Lineberger Stadium.

"A lot of people have expected us to lose in the second or third round," South Point running back Joe Brown said after the 12-1 Red Raiders advanced to play at Winston-Salem Carver (13-0) next Friday night. "This lets people know that we're serious about going all the way this time."

To be honest, South Point has played more than 14 games only once in its storied football history —



Andrew Russell/The Gazette

South Point's John Alexander takes down Mooresville's Matt Lambert, causing a fumble early in the game. The Red Raiders defeated the Blue Devils 12-10 Friday.

that coming in the 1979 3A state championship season when the playoffs were a round shorter.

Five other times, the Red Raiders have played 13 games, including the last three seasons.

Among those seasons have come

frustrating playoff losses in 1993, 1999, 2000 and last season.

"Our kids are great overachievers," South Point coach John Devine said of this year's team. "We're not

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Gazette photos by Nikki Fox

South Point players and coaches celebrate the team's 12-10 win over Mooresville Friday night.

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the fastest. We're not the strongest. We're not the biggest. We just work real hard and play real hard. It's a credit to them and their believing in each other."

On Friday night, they believed and believed and believed some more.

Even as Mooresville (12-2) appeared to forever be within striking distance of scores that would've changed the game.

But instead of thinking today about "woulda, coulda, shoulda" like in years past, it is South Point that can recall critical defensive stops or timely offensive playmaking.

On offense, South Point drove the length of the field twice to take charge of the contest and then virtually clinch victory.

The Red Raiders drove 69 yards in 13 plays on its first possession, capped by Joe Brown's 30th touchdown of the season - a 2-yard plunge.

Then, after the game's score remained 6-3 South Point for much of the night, the Red Raiders drove 66 yards in 13 plays in a grueling 6-minute, 50-second drive that pushed South Point's advantage to what proved to be an insurmountable 12-3 with 3:09 to play.

Javar Williams' 24-yard pass to Tyler Gorton capped the march, with Gorton using a Brooks Drennan block inside the Mooresville 5 to navigate the final yardage.

"What a big play," Devine said. "It was just great execution by Javar."

And while South Point's defense allowed a trick-play-enhanced four-play, 79-yard



South Point quarterback Javar Williams throws a 24-yard touchdown pass to Tyler Gorton, foreground, in the fourth quarter. The touchdown proved to be the decisive points in the Raiders' win.

drive to make the final score close, the Red Raiders snuffed Mooresville in its final four plays on a quarterback sack, two incompletions and a sure tackle by John Alexander.

The stand capped a night in which South Point limited Mooresville to points on only two of its five drives into Red

Raiders' territory.

Once, South Point forced a fumble recovered by Andrew Rhinehardt. Two other times, the Red Raiders held the Blue Devils on downs.

"We bend every game here lately it seems like," Devine said. "But we played with unbelievable intensity for 48

minutes. And if we hadn't, we'd have been going home because that was a great Mooresville team."

Mooresville outgained the Red Raiders 247-219 overall, but South Point's Brown and Williams had the biggest individual offensive nights.

Brown had 120 yards rushing and two touchdowns on 25 carries. Williams had 40 yards rushing on 19 tries and 51 yards passing on three-of-five accuracy.

Alexander, Phillip Stowe and Joe Costner had eight solo or first-hit tackles apiece to lead the South Point defense. Jonathan Mitchell and Randy Robinson added five stops each.

"I thought our kids played hard and played pretty well," Blue Devils coach Mike Carter said. "We just couldn't get it into the end zone when we had some chances."

South Point 12, Mooresville 10

M	0 3 0 7 - 10	
SP	6 0 0 6 - 12	
SP	Joe Brown 2 run (Kick failed)	
M	FG Doug Haneline 23	
SP	Tyler Gorton 24 pass from Javar Williams (Kick failed)	
M	David Sherrill 4 run (Haneline kick)	
	M	SP
First downs	9	12
Rushing	39-164	50-168
Passing yards	83	51
Passes	4-80	3-50
Fumbles lost	3-1	4-1
Penalties-yards	1-5	5-39

Individual statistics

RUSHING: M - Sky McCombs 8-40, Sherrill 9-59, E.J. Wilson 9-39, Matt Lambert 13-26, SP - Brown 25-120, Williams 19-40, Brian McWhirter 1-5, Gorton 5-3.
PASSING: M - Lambert 3-50 37, McCombs 1-30 46, SP - Williams 3-50 51.
RECEIVING: M - Lambert 1-46, David Bowles 2-8, Wilson 0-11, McCombs 1-18, SP - Brooks Drennan 1-10, Wade Harris 1-17, Gorton 1-24.