

TOUGH START



Amy Sharp/The Gazette

South Point running back Joe Brown blows past Northwestern defenders during Friday night's game in Belmont. Brown finished with 87 yards on 15 carries, but the Red Raiders lost their season opener 28-21.

Friday's scoreboard

Ashbrook	13	Rosman	41	Hunter Huss	40
Myers Park	9	Highland Tech	12	Cherryville	7
Forestview	61	Chase	15	East Lincoln	40
Berry Academy	0	Bessemer City	12	West Lincoln	12
Lincolnton	44	East Gaston	28	Hopewell	54
North Gaston	15	Kings Mountain	6	North Lincoln	0

High school football, 6-7C

Turnovers doom Red Raiders in battle against S.C. 4A power

By PHILLIP GARDNER
Gazette Sports Reporter

BELMONT — South Point didn't want any cupcakes on its schedule. The Red Raiders got their wish from the season opener.

Rock Hill (S.C.) Northwestern, a 4A powerhouse, bullied its way into Belmont for a 28-21 victory that went to the final horn and didn't destroy the Red Raiders' optimistic outlook on the rest of the season.

"We're still confident. We played a good team tonight," senior quarterback Javar Williams said. "We've got to eliminate mistakes. If it wasn't for the turnovers, we would have won."

He's right.

The Red Raiders turned the ball over three times, including a fumble returned for touchdown early in the third quarter in front of a Lineberger Stadium crowd estimated at 4,500.

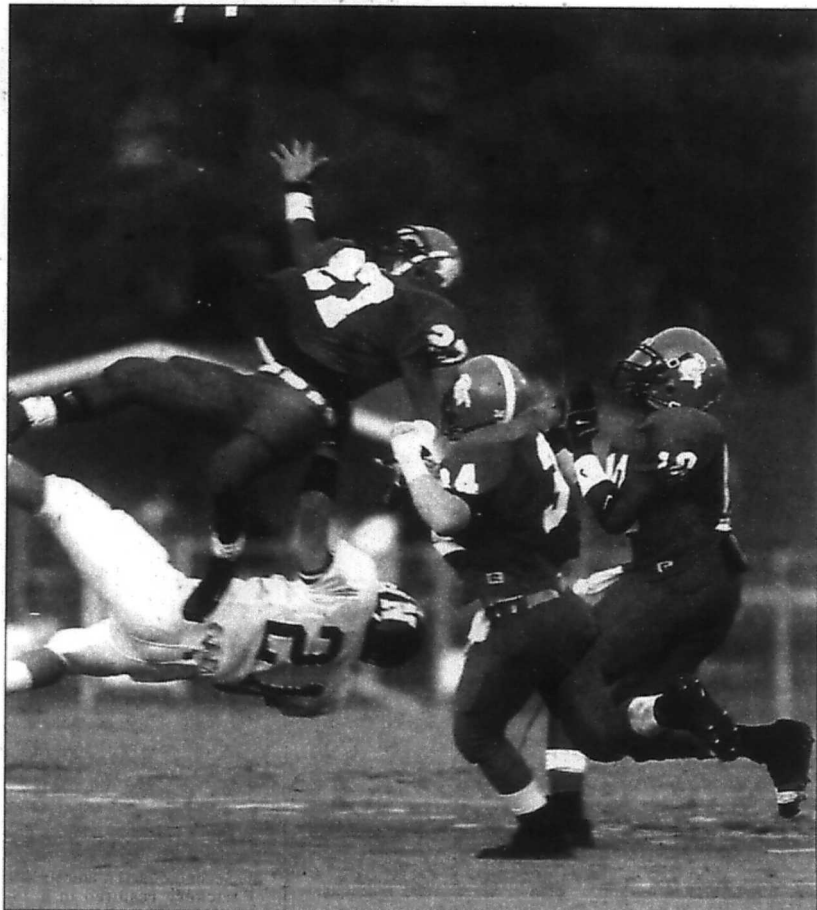
South Point (0-1) actually produced more yards of total offense, rolling up 340 yards to Northwestern's 302. But the Red Raiders lost the battle in turnovers and field position.

"It came down to execution," South Point head coach John Devine said. "We didn't execute the second half like the first and we forgot how to tackle there at the end for some reason."

Devine was referring to an 82-yard run by Donta Walker that sealed the game with less than three minutes to play. Walker's burst up the middle set up a 6-yard scoring run by Omar Craig that put the Trojans (1-0) ahead 28-14.

Before the scoring drive, South Point was in position to tie the game. The Red Raiders drove 55 yards to the Northwestern 20 but stalled on fourth down, when Williams' pass to Ivey Watson was intercepted in the end zone by the Trojans' Jamie Robinson.

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Amy Sharp/The Gazette

South Point defensive back Ivey Watson goes high into the air for a tipped ball as teammates Chris Richards, center, and Brandon Reid defend.

▼ Red Raiders

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That didn't totally put the game out of reach. An unsportsmanlike penalty on Northwestern after the play put the Trojans deep in their own territory on the 10 with 3:12 remaining.

Two plays later, however, Walker busted right through the middle of the line for his game-breaking run. South Point's Watson prevented the touchdown, catching up with him and tackling him by the heels at the South Point 6-yard line. But the damage had already been done.

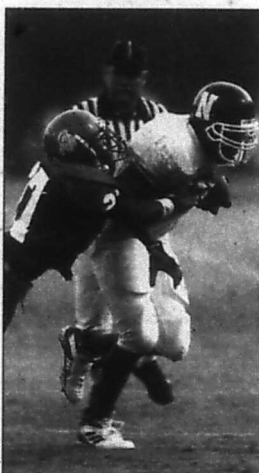
"I kept telling Donta, 'If you'll keep hitting it, keep hitting it, keep hitting it, you're going to break one,' and he did," Northwestern coach Jimmy Wallace said.

Walker finished with 196 yards on 23 carries.

South Point had its chances.

With the score knotted at 14, the Red Raiders had driven into Northwestern territory early in the fourth quarter, but a fumble by fullback Joe Brown gave the Trojans the ball at their own 43.

Northwestern settled for a punt but pinned the Red Raiders on their own 1-yard line. South Point went three-and-out, and Walker returned Andrew Rinehart's punt 26 yards to the South Point 17,



Amy Sharp/The Gazette

Northwestern's Joe Patton is dragged down by South Point defender Ivey Watson Friday night.

setting up his own 2-yard touchdown run to put Northwestern up 21-14.

"I think the effort was there and the attitude was there," Devine said. "We just in the second half looked like we were a bunch of kids who hadn't seen the football in a while."

Daniel Lyons recovered both South Point fumbles, returning

the first one 14 yards for a touchdown just 20 seconds into the second half for a 14-7 lead.

"Them son of a guns were good," Devine said. "I thought we played pretty darn well just to stay on the field with them."

Williams, the reigning Gazette offensive player of the year, was impressive in defeat, rushing for 100 yards on 17 carries and completing 6 of 18 passes for 122 yards and one interception. Brown rushed for 87 yards on 15 carries.

Northwestern (S.C.) 28, South Point 21

NW 7 0 7 14 — 28

SP 7 0 7 7 — 21

NW — Jimmy Maners 28 run (Kyle

Neely kick)

SP — Jamari Crawford 6 run (Andrew

Rinehart kick)

NW — Daniel Lyons 14 fumble recovery (Neely kick)

SP — Joe Brown 30 run (Rinehart

kick)

NW — Donta Walker 2 run (Neely

kick)

NW — Omar Craig 6 run (Neely kick)

SP — Javar Williams 10 run (Rinehart

kick)

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