

Raiders exorcise demons, ward off rival Crest in rout

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BELMONT — For years, Cleveland County schools have taken their turn tormenting South Point High's successful football program.

On Friday, one of those demons was exorcised as the Red Raiders rolled past Crest 35-7 before approximately 5,000 fans at Lineberger Stadium.

"For years and years in Cleveland County, it was Kings Mountain for us," said South Point coach John Devine,

whose team	SOUTH POINT	35
opens its Big	CREST	7
South 3A		

Conference

schedule at home next Friday against East Gaston after a 3-1 non-conference finish. "We overcame that hurdle in '99 to end a four-game losing streak to the Mountaineers.

"We talked about that this week with Crest. They'd beaten us two straight years, but we'd been knocking on the door."

Friday night, they emphatically knocked that door down behind nifty blocking from some veteran linemen, the hard running of Joe Brown and the crafty play-calling of Javar Williams.



Andrew Russell/The Gazette

South Point fullback Joe Brown breaks through the Crest defense when South Point hosted Crest on Friday. The Raiders won 35-7.

▼ Raiders

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Brown, who had played in the two losses to the Chargers in the past two years, said settling a score made Friday's victory significant.

"I felt it was a special thing," said Brown, who rushed for 185 yards and three touchdowns in 19 carries. "They beat us 42-12 here when I was a sophomore and 28-7 up there last year. So this was sweet revenge."

Revenge that came through veteran play against a Crest team that made mistakes indicative of its youth.

Outside of 63 yards in penalties, South Point had an efficient, almost flawless performance.

Behind an offensive line led by veterans Adam Hodge, Jonathan Mims, Jesse Whitely and Jarrod Fraley, Williams and Brown led the Red Raiders to 388 yards of offense and 18 first downs.

Meanwhile, Crest picked up 252 yards total offense but were stopped at the goal line by a dropped pass and fumbled snap. And once on special teams, the Chargers yielded a critical fake punt keeper by Williams, even as Chargers' coaches frantically yelled for their players to be alert for such a play.

"Those three plays go another way and it's a different ballgame," Crest coach Roy Kirby said. "It's just like last week (in a 17-14 loss at Shelby). We were inside the 5 twice and got nothing. We've got to learn how to score inside the 5."

Nonetheless, Kirby was impressed with the manner in which South Point played against his team, which dropped to 0-3 for the first time in 11 seasons following its worst loss in four years.

"They've got 16 returning starters," Kirby said of South Point. "You can build on that. They execute. They don't make mistakes. They're veterans and played like it. We're rookies and played like it. So that's what happens."

After Crest's opening drive sputtered at the Red Raiders 14 and resulted in a missed field goal with 6:58 to play in the opening quarter, South Point began its workmanlike victory.

Brown scored on a 54-yard trap play to cap a six-play, 80-yard drive for the first score.

Two possessions later, Williams capped a six-play, 55-yard drive with an 8-yard touchdown keeper. Williams' 21-yard pass to Jamari Jeter had earlier been the big play of the march.

Crest nudged within 14-7 on its next possession when Martray Littlejohn broke free for a 48-yard scoring run.

But South Point closed the opening half with momentum after Brown's 4-yard run ended the Red Raiders' next possession.

Crest's first drive of the second half seemed to steal some of South Point's momentum, as the Chargers marched 14 plays from their own 20 to the Red Raiders 1.

But on the next play, Crest quarterback Maurice Gullatte fumbled the snap from center and the Red Raiders' Tyler Lemons recovered.

South Point's response to the Chargers' challenge — a 10-play, 99-yard scoring drive that featured Williams' 6-yard fake punt first down run — put the Red Raiders ahead 28-7 with 7:37 to play.

"After that fumble, I could tell they didn't want it no

more," Brown said of Crest. "They quit."

Williams said he felt the game was in hand earlier than that.

"After they drove the first time and didn't score, I knew we had them," Williams said. "Then we went straight down the field and I knew it was going to be our night."

Brown tallied his third score — a 1-yard run — and Andrew Rinehart booted his fifth extra point to close the scoring with 2:19 to play.

Williams finished with 104 yards passing and 36 yards rushing to complement Brown's rushing.

Gullatte led Crest with 120 yards passing on 12 of 23 accuracy. Martray Littlejohn, who left with a sprained ankle in the third quarter, added 94 yards rushing in 11 carries.

Kirby said Littlejohn wasn't hurt seriously and could've played if not for Crest's Southwestern Foothills 3A Conference opener next week against Hickory.

Defensively, Josh Robinson had six solo or first-hit tackles to lead South Point, which also got three stops and three pass breakups from Ivey Watson. Crest got seven hits, including one for loss from Demorris Brooks. Chris Williamson added six and Nathan George five with a quarterback sack for the Chargers.

C	0	7	0	0	-	7
SP	7	14	0	14	-	35

SP — Joe Brown 54 run (Andrew Rinehart kick)

SP — Javar Williams 8 run (Rinehart kick)

C — Martray Littlejohn 48 run (Erik Lemmon kick)

SP — Brown 4 run (Rinehart kick)

SP — Jamari Jeter 34 run (Rinehart kick)

SP — Brown 1 run (Rinehart kick)