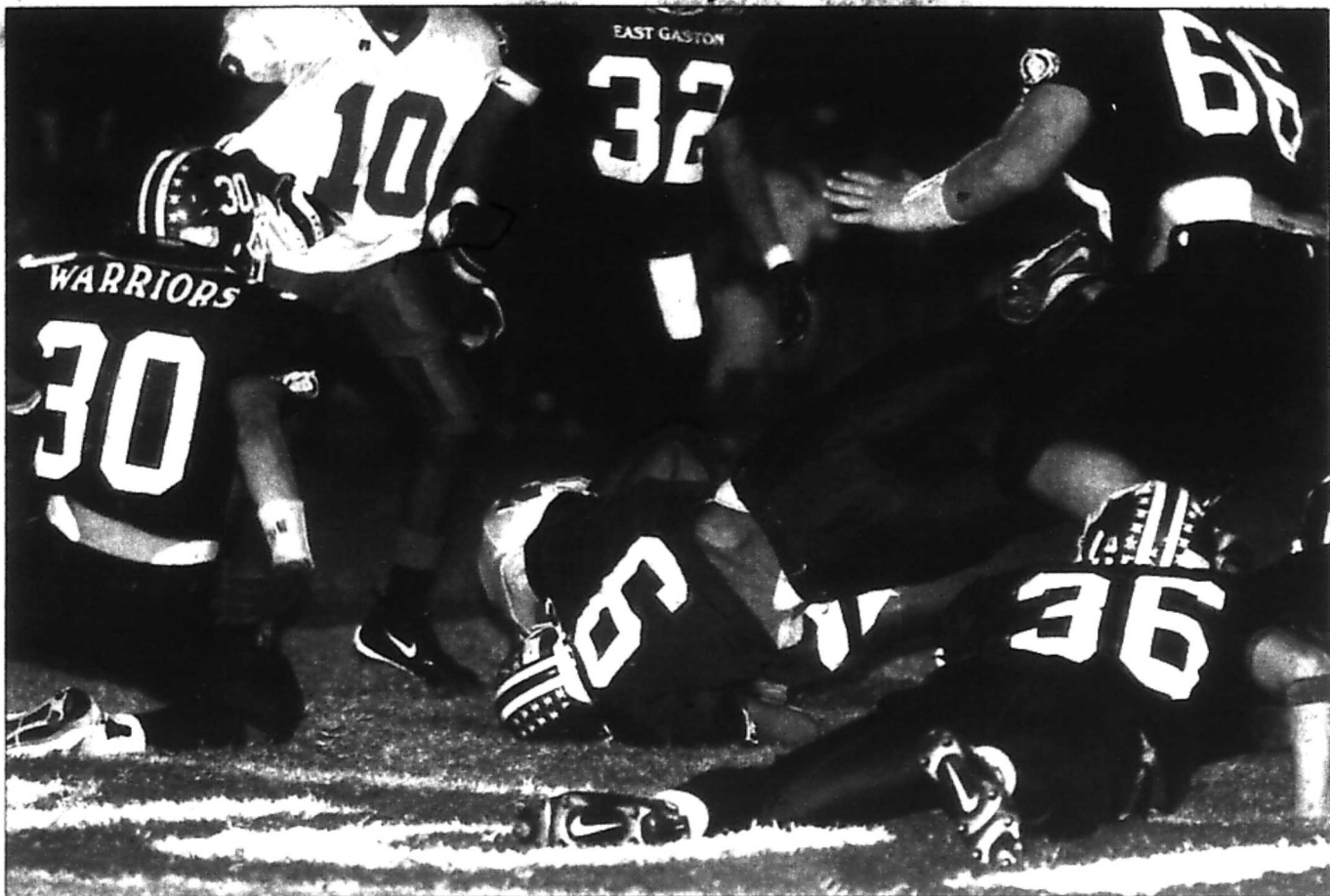


SOUTH POINT 34, EAST GASTON 28



Photos by Amy Wright, The Gazette

East Gaston's Leon Shipp (9) takes a nosedive into the turf after returning a kick against South Point Friday night. The Warriors had the Red Raiders on their heels for much of the night, but South Point rallied late and pulled out a 34-28 win.

Close, but ...

McGlenn's interception spoils upset bid by rival Warriors

BY PHILLIP GARDNER
Gazette Sports Reporter

MOUNT HOLLY — The clock read 1:52 and East Gaston stood 38 yards away from pulling off the big win it's been craving in its quest to turn around a once-struggling program.

The Warriors hadn't defeated their biggest rival in nine years, and South Point, appearing vulnerable for the first time in recent memory, had left the door wide-open, missing an extra point moments earlier to lead by just six points.

East Gaston had confidence in its offense, which had piled up yardage and points all night.

But in a game of big plays, South Point came up with the last one when Cameron McGlenn intercepted an East Gaston pass at the South Point 3-yard line with 1:44 remaining to seal the Red Raiders' dramatic 34-28 win Friday.

"When you get in a game like this, you can't flinch," South Point coach John Devine said. "You can't bend over and shut your eyes. You've got to play with your eyes wide open."

McGlenn did just that, end-



Amy Wright/The Gazette

Cameron McGlenn, shown here returning a kick, had a late interception to seal South Point's win.

ing the hopes of an East Gaston team that's improved tremendously over the past two seasons but couldn't get past its nemesis for the first time since winning 3-0 in 1995.

Coming close hardly offered consolation.

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"It makes it 10 times harder," said East Gaston quarterback Ryan Baker, who completed 10 of 19 passes for 221 yards before throwing his second interception with 1:44 to play. "I'd have rather gotten beat 35-0 than get beat 34-28."

The game was played in a raucous atmosphere. The Arrowhead Stadium crowd was estimated to be around 5,000, making it the biggest crowd ever to watch an East Gaston football game. And they watched a classic.

Baker tossed a 71-yard touchdown pass to Marcus Reid on the first play of the fourth quarter to give East Gaston a 28-21 lead.

But Brandon Spencer returned the ensuing kickoff 76 yards to the East Gaston 14 and Jordon Gilmore scored on a 2-yard run to tie the score at 28 with Andrew Rinehart's extra-point.

South Point (3-1, 1-0 Big South 3A) then intercepted Baker on East Gaston's next se-

ries and once again took advantage of a short field, driving 25 yards in seven plays and scoring on a 2-yard quarterback keeper by Rinehart.

On the extra-point attempt, holder Tyler Lemons couldn't get the ball to the stay on the block, so he picked the ball up and tried to run. East Gaston immediately tackled him, giving the Warriors hope of winning on a touchdown and extra point.

"We felt good. We felt like we were going to go down and score," East Gaston coach Mark Latham said.

Rinehart's kickoff resulted in a touchback. East Gaston (2-3, 1-1 Big South 3A) then drove to the South Point 38 in seven plays — four running, three passing. Baker then threw an incomplete pass before McGlenn picked off his attempted throw to Reid.

"You've got to play every play with unbelievable effort," McGlenn said. "You've just got to play hard all game, 48 minutes."

The game featured a 95-yard kickoff return for touchdown by South Point's Josh Robinson

in the first quarter and a 72-yard punt return by East Gaston's Leon Shipp four minutes later.

Baker also connected with Michael McDowell for a 65-yard scoring pass on East Gaston's first play in the third quarter to tie the score at 21.

"We're just happy to pull it out," said Rinehart, who rushed for 57 yards and two touchdowns. "They played incredibly tough and we knew they would. They do every year."

Bryan Jennings rushed for 138 yards on 27 carries to lead South Point's 315-yard rushing attack.

Desmond Wilson, playing tailback in the absence of Ronnie Brooks (hamstring), rushed for 160 yards on 26 carries. Wilson carried 20 times in the first half, setting up East Gaston's big-play passing attack in the second half.

South Point, which held East Gaston to a three-and-out on the game's first series and marched 52 yards on four plays to take an early 7-0 lead, twice fumbled in the red zone. Boogie

Tate recovered a Jennings fumble on the 4-yard line late in the second quarter and Aaron Patterson jumped on Rinehart's fumble at the 14-yard line late in the third quarter.

"I am extremely happy with our kids tonight," Latham said. "... It seems like every time we play South Point, we look for that one score to get behind, then we lay our heads down and tonight we played for 48 minutes."

SP 13 0 8 13 — 34
EG 14 0 7 7 — 28
SP—Josh Robinson 14 run (Andrew Rinehart kick)
EG—Desmond Wilson 19 run (Adam Davis kick)
SP—Robinson 95 kickoff return (kick blocked)
EG—Leon Shipp 72 punt return (Davis kick)
SP—Rinehart 2 run (Brandon Spencer fumble recovery)
EG—Michael McDowell 65 pass from Ryan Baker (Davis kick)
EG—Marcus Reid 71 pass from Baker (Davis kick)
SP—Jordon Gilmore 2 run (Rinehart kick)
SP—Rinehart 2 run (run failed)