

PREP FOOTBALL

SOUTH POINT 47, EAST LINCOLN 14

More of the same for Red Raiders

South Point claims sixth straight conference crown by striking fast against Mustangs

By RICHARD WALKER
Gazette Sports Reporter

DENVER — South Point High struck quickly and efficiently Friday night in a 47-14 victory over East Lincoln as the Red Raiders clinched a county-record sixth straight conference football title.

South Point shares the 2004 Big South 3A Conference title with Ashbrook, but advances into next week's N.C. High School Athletic Association playoffs as a No. 2 seed due to a 31-27 loss at Ashbrook a month ago.

"These kids just wouldn't accept anything less than a championship," said Devine, who had to rebuild after losing 27 seniors, including 18 starters, from a 15-1 team that won last year's 2003 Class 3A state title. "We had a chance to be outright champions, but we messed around at Ashbrook and lost."

The share of the league title means South Point has won six straight league titles — the fi-

nal two championships of the Southwestern 3A Conference in 1999 and 2000 and at least a share of each of the four Big South crowns from 2001 through this year.

Ashbrook had been the previous county record-holder by winning league titles in each of that school's first five seasons (1970-74).

South Point wrapped up its sixth straight league title behind speedy and elusive Josh Robinson and despite a sound game plan by East Lincoln High coach Matt Rikard. Rikard knew the Red Raiders' offense was powerful and could strike quickly. That's why he hoped a time-consuming wishbone offensive attack would give his team a chance.

Well, it did and it didn't.

Rikard's strategy was successful in that it allowed the Mustangs more offensive snaps than the Red Raiders. But the Red Raiders were so efficient it didn't matter as Robinson sparked some rapid-fire offen-

sive fireworks in the middle of the game that saw South Point score 34 points in an eight-minute, two-second stretch.

"I knew they were an explosive team and they sure demonstrated it," Rikard said.

Robinson led the effort with 340 all-purpose yards and four touchdowns. The 5-foot-10, 180-pounder had 141 yards rushing and two touchdowns on four carries, 85 yards receiving and two touchdowns in three catches, 73 yards on two punt returns and 41 yards on one kick-off return. Robinson also had two solo or first-hit tackles on defense and a sliding pass interception on defense.

"Josh was just phenomenal," Devine said.

Robinson first showed his firepower on South Point's only offensive play of the opening quarter. He took quarterback Andrew Rinehart's pitch on a toss sweep right and raced untouched 80 yards for the game's first touchdown.

"We had worked on that in

practice all week long and it worked pretty good," said Jordan Gilmore, the South Point fullback who replaced injured Bryan Jennings by rushing 16 times for 75 yards and two touchdowns.

Robinson later added touchdown receptions of 38 and 14 yards from Rinehart and a 37-yard scoring run. The 38-yard TD catch started the Red Raiders' 34-point blast.

It came with 5:43 left in the opening half and put South Point ahead 12-0. Gilmore's 16-yard run and Rinehart's first of five extra points made it 19-0 with 2:01 left in the first half. Then, after two East Lincoln fumbles in the final 1:45 of the half, Gilmore tallied a 2-yard TD run with 15.4 seconds left and Rinehart found Brandon Spencer for a 19-yard TD pass with 2.1 seconds left. Robinson closed the flurry with a 37-yard TD run that capped the opening drive of the second half and made the score 40-0 with 9:31 left in the third quarter.

"It was just bam, bam, bam, bam," Rikard said. "We're thinking we're in the game at 6-0 and then they just started making play after play."

South Point finished the game with 319 yards total offense on 36 snaps, including 104 yards passing on four-of-five passing accuracy by Rinehart. East Lincoln had more snaps (49) but managed 158 yards as South Point's John Goodwin (14 tackles) and Cameron McGlenn (10 tackles) led a gang-tackling Red Raiders' defense.

SP 6 27 14 0 — 47
EL 0 0 0 14 — 14

SP — Josh Robinson 80 run (kick failed)

SP — Robinson 38 pass from Andrew Rinehart (run failed)

SP — Jordan Gilmore 16 run (Rinehart kick)

SP — Gilmore 2 run (Rinehart kick)

SP — Brandon Spencer 19 pass from Rinehart (Rinehart kick)

SP — Robinson 37 run (Rinehart kick)

SP — Robinson 14 pass from Rinehart (Rinehart kick)

EL — Carlos Marquez Sykes 16 fumble return (Ellis Dunston kick)

EL — Xavier Alexander 9 pass from Seth Alexander (Dunston kick)