



Benjamin Patton/The Gazette

Lincolnton defenders Caleb Grooms, center, and Drew Mullen tackle South Point quarterback Tyler Lemons on Friday in Lincolnton's victory.

RED IN THE FACE

Fake field goal gives Wolves first victory over South Point since '96

By PHILLIP GARDNER
Gazette Sports Reporter

LINCOLNTON — As Lincolnton lined up for a game-winning field goal in double overtime Friday, South Point called three straight timeouts to ice the kicker.

It was all Lincolnton players could do to hold back their laughter, knowing they were getting ready to run a fake field goal.

When the Wolves were finally able to snap on first and goal from the 10, Zack Gibson received the snap, stood up and rolled left, then hit a sliding Derek Butler in the end zone for a 27-21 win.

"I bet our team didn't even know we were doing it," Gibson said. "It was just 11 (on the field) and (head coach) Scott Cloninger was all that knew."

It was a tense game throughout at a near-capacity Memorial Stadium — something new for a series that South Point had dominated for almost a decade. The Red Raiders had won eight in a row, including the last six by an average of 30.8 points. But this one had plenty of drama, especially at the end.

After both teams scored on their first possession in overtime, Lincolnton stopped South Point when Demery Williams intercepted Tyler Lemons' pass

attempt on third-and-goal from the 12.

"Two of my teammates tipped it," Williams said. "Thank God that I was in the right place at the right time because it fell right in my hands."

Lincolnton then lined up in field goal formation on first down. Cloninger said he planned to kick a field goal on second down if the fake didn't work.

"I felt very confident," Cloninger said. "The last thing I told Zack was, 'Don't throw an interception. That's the one thing you cannot do.'"



Benjamin Patton/The Gazette

South Point linebacker Jordon Gilmore tackles Lincolnton quarterback Zack Gibson on Friday in Lincolnton. Gibson hit wide receiver Derek Butler in the end zone to beat the Red Raiders 27-21 in a double overtime win.

▼ Wolves

continued from Page 1C

South Point had pressure in the backfield, but an accurate throw by Gibson and an athletic play by Butler made sure another play wasn't necessary.

"I knew they couldn't send but one guy out. We had a guy that was within a yard of it," South Point coach John Devine said. "What can you do? We had pressure on it. We were coming hard. The kid makes a great play. Hail to the victor."

Lincolnton (2-0) sent a message early that this wouldn't be another South Point runaway. The Wolves struck on their second play from scrimmage on a quick slant from Gibson to C.J. Wilson that resulted in an 83-yard touchdown. Wilson caught the ball just past the line of scrimmage, darted up the middle and outran the rest of the defenders to the end zone.

The Wolves never trailed, although they were tied three times after that.

"What I told our team before the game and at halftime is we need to play South Point like we play people late in the sea-

son and they did," Cloninger said. "If you see us seventh or eighth game of the year, we're usually a lot better than we are early."

A short punt in the second quarter gave South Point possession at the Lincolnton 30 and set up the Red Raiders' first score. Eight plays later, Jordon Gilmore punched it in from 2 yards out. Matthew Mitchell's extra point tied the score at 7 with 1:17 left in the half.

In the third quarter, a 29-yard pass from Gibson to Mardriekus Mayfield ignited a 66-yard scoring drive for Lincolnton. Lance Friday carried from 1 yard out to give the Wolves a 14-7 lead with 22 seconds left in the period.

South Point answered three plays later when Lemons found Marcus Duckworth wide open behind the Lincolnton secondary for a 65-yard scoring pass. The Red Raiders attempted a 53-yard field goal on their next possession (it was low and wide) but neither team came closer to scoring before overtime.

Lincolnton felt fortunate to be tied at halftime after the Red Raiders controlled posses-

sion most of the first 24 minutes. South Point ran 34 plays compared to only 12 by Lincolnton.

While the Red Raiders tired the Lincolnton defense with a grind-in-out option offense, Lincolnton was all or nothing.

After the long touchdown pass, Lincolnton turned the ball over on two of its next three plays, the first on a fumble, the next on an errant flea-flicker by Gibson, picked off by Paul Beal.

South Point also had trouble holding onto the ball in the first half but recovered all five of its fumbles.

Contact Phillip Gardner at (704) 869-1843 or phillip_gardner@link.freedom.com.

Lincolnton 27, South Point 21, 2 OT

SP 070770-21
L 707076-27
L - C.J. Wilson 83 pass from Zack Gibson (George Ramirez kick)
SP - Jordon Gilmore 2 run (Matthew Mitchell kick)
L - Lance Friday 1 run (Ramirez kick)
SP - Marcus Duckworth 65 pass from Tyler Lemons (Mitchell kick)
L - Wilson 4 run (Ramirez kick)
SP - Gilmore 5 run (Mitchell kick)
L - Derek Butler 10 pass from Gibson (no attempt)