

# Wildcat Wonder

## North Gaston picks up first Big South win

By PHILLIP GARDNER  
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DALLAS — North Gaston players couldn't hide their excitement after Friday's 17-16 defeat of South Point on senior night.

After the post-game huddle, more than a dozen of them slowly sneaked toward the end zone, leapt onto the field goal post and tried to tear it down. Head coach Bruce Clark promptly put an end to the unruly celebration, but nothing could spoil the Wildcats' big moment.

"We've never, in the four years I've been here, beat South Point," linebacker/defensive lineman Josh Carter said. "Tonight was something else."

South Point (7-3, 3-2 Big South 3A/4A Conference) threatened three times in the fourth quarter, but North Gaston (5-6, 1-5) held each time to notch its first conference win and cement its hopes of earning in spot in the state playoffs.

North Gaston had lost five straight after a 4-1 start and needed a win to feel better about its playoff chances. That and the fact that the Wildcats hadn't defeated the Red Raiders since 2001 was all the motivation they needed to pull the upset.



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FootballFridayNights.com

Michelle Williams/The Gazette

Princeton Brooks runs down the field Friday in a game against South Point at North Gaston High School. Brooks ran for 66 yards and the Huskies put up 261 yards of offense in a win on Senior Night.

# ▼ Wildcats



Michelle Williams/The Gazette

South Point's Tyler Lemons tackles North Gaston's Caleb Potter during Friday's game in Dallas.

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Sophomore quarterback A.J. Blue ran for 119 yards, including the game-clinching 13-yard dash on third down with 41 seconds remaining. The run was good for a first-down and allowed North Gaston to wind down the rest of the clock.

"To be able to go out here on your home field, your last game of the season and win against that kind of opponent just kind of makes it all worthwhile," Clark said.

South Point fumbled three times deep in North Gaston territory. A 61-yard run by Matt Hudspeth on the final play of the third quarter gave South Point a chance to pull out of a 17-16 deficit. But disaster struck two plays later.

Tyler Lemons fumbled the center-to-quarterback exchange at the 1-yard line and North Gaston's Josh Carter recovered in the end zone for a touchback.

"They're 16-, 17-year-old kids and made mistakes," South Point coach John Devine said. "They were trying to make a play, trying to help us win and they made a mistake. Nobody feels worse than those two kids."

After North Gaston drove to the South Point 13 and missed a 31-yard field goal on the next series, South Point threatened again by driving 41 yards in four plays to the North Gaston 39. But the drive once again came to a halt by a fumble, this time by Cameron McGlenn.

The Red Raiders held North Gaston to three-and-out and then reached the North Gaston 26 on the ensuing possession. But Matthew Mitchell's 44-yard field goal attempt with 55.7 seconds re-

maining sailed wide left.

A missed extra point by Mitchell earlier in the game proved to be the difference. South Point answered a 1-yard touchdown run by Blue in the third quarter with a 65-yard scoring scamper by Lemons to seemingly tie the score. But Mitchell's extra-point attempt was left of the target.

The result was the end of South Point's string of six consecutive conference titles. Before the game, the Red Raiders held hope of a shared league championship provided that they win the remainder of their games and Hunter Huss beat Ashbrook next week.

"It's over. ... We're playing for second place," Devine said. "Who cares."

Princeton Brooks added 66 yards on the ground for North Gaston. Josh Laye caught four passes for 75 yards.

Hudspeth, playing his second game after missing two contests with a knee injury, gave the Red Raiders an offensive spark off the bench. The junior rushed for 119 yards on just eight carries — all in the final 14 minutes. Lemons finished with 74 yards rushing.

SP 0 3 13 0 - 16  
NG 3 0 14 0 - 17  
NG-FG Eric Hernandez 36  
SP-FG Matthew Mitchell 42  
SP-Jonathan Graham 15 fumble return (Mitchell kick)  
NG-Princeton Brooks 4 run (Hernandez kick)  
NG-A.J. Blue 1 run (Hernandez kick)  
SP-Tyler Lemons 65 run (kick failed)

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