

Raiders make most of classic battle, beat Wave

Fourth-quarter rally lifts South Point past county rival Ashbrook

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GASTONIA — It wasn't the biggest game of the year, as it had been in the past. It wasn't even the biggest game of the week. But, it might have been the most exciting game of the night.

South Point, officially winless on the season, overcame a fourth-quarter deficit and rallied to beat county rival Ashbrook 24-17 Friday at William Eccles Field.

The Red Raiders, who discovered this week that they had used an ineligible player for a second time this season and were stripped of three wins, acted as if it didn't happen or, at worst, didn't matter, by outplaying the Green Wave (2-6 overall, 0-3 Big South 3A/4A).

"It's all about character," said South Point head-coach John Devine. "Our kids could have quit on me. They could have quit on each other, but they love each other. They believe in hope, faith and love. That's why they won tonight."

"We went through a whole lot of adversity this week. We just practiced real hard every day this week."

Desmond Lowery
South Point QB

Since inception of the Big South in 2001, the South Point and Ashbrook game has always been one of the biggest games of the year, and certainly the biggest contest of the week in Gaston County.

Because of the emergence of conference leaders Hunter Huss and East Gaston this year, the annual battle between the Red Raiders and Green Wave took second stage on this night.

Ashbrook, which limped into the game without a league win after having lost two starting quarterbacks to injury, and South Point, enduring forfeitures after a win over Lincoln on Aug. 25 and a loss to Huss last Friday, have combined to either win or share every Big South championship the past five years.

This season, that wasn't go-



Photos by Brittany Randolph/The Gazette

Ashbrook's Patrick Hall runs past South Point defender John Rhyne at Ashbrook High School on Friday night. Below, South Point's Jesse Magaha, who scored on the team's third play of the game, catches the ball in front of Ashbrook defender Chris Woods.

ing to be the case entering the showdown.

Instead of a sloppy game between teams at the bottom of the standings, South Point and Ashbrook surprised the naysayers and played one of the most even and competitive matchups in their 32-game history.

"I thought it was a heck of a ballgame," said Ashbrook coach Mike Briggs. "I thought they came out and played hard and I thought we came out and played hard. We just didn't win. Anytime Ashbrook and South Point play, it's going to be a hard-fought battle."

Both teams got off to fast starts.

The Green Wave scored on their first play of the game on a 79-yard run by Ryan Gordon. South Point scored on its third play of the game when Jesse Magaha grabbed a 48-yard pass from Desmond Lowery.

Tied at seven, both teams connected on field goals in the first half, as well — a 33-yarder from Ashbrook's Patrick Cullum and a 29-yard kick by Red Raider Matthew Mitchell.

"We went through a whole lot of adversity this week," Lowery said. "We just practiced real hard every day this week."

Ashbrook took a 17-10 lead in the third quarter with a 10-yard pass to Jheranie Boyd from freshman quarterback Austin Scott, the third signal-caller to take snaps in 2006 for the Green Wave.

It appeared the Green Wave had enough momentum, to



stave off South Point, but Ashbrook was unable to milk the fourth quarter clock and had to punt three times.

South Point tied the game at 17 on Lowery's second touchdown pass of the game — this time on a 55-yarder to Brandon Spencer.

With 5:26 remaining, the Red Raiders scored the go-ahead touchdown by the unlikely ways.

Wing back Marcus Duckworth scampered 16 before fumbling into the hands of Spencer, who rushed ahead 19 more yards for the score in a wild finish.

Ashbrook had a final shot at the end zone in the last minutes of the game.

On fourth down and goal from the 13-yard line, the Red Raider defense batted away a

Scott pass attempt near the goal line with 49.8 seconds left.

South Point (1-6 overall, 1-3 BS 3A/4A) hosts Forestview at Lineberger Stadium Friday. Ashbrook travels to Mount Holly to meet East Gaston.

"We've got five left to go," Devine said. "Why can't we be 10-6? I don't see any reason why we can't. Somebody's going to have to tell me different."

SP 730 14 - 24
A 1007 0 - 17

A — Ryan Gordon 79 run (Patrick Cullum kick)
SP — Jesse Magaha 48 pass from Desmond Lowery (Matthew Mitchell kick)
A — Cullum 33 FG
SP — Mitchell 29 FG
A — Jheranie Boyd 10 pass from Austin Scott (Cullum)
SP — Brandon Spencer 55 pass from Lowery (Mitchell kick)
SP — Spencer 19 run (Mitchell kick)