

Raiders bring their best to Dallas

South Point's Michael Lewis (8) jumps into the arms of Daniel Holmes (32) after South Point's 38-35 win over North Gaston on Monday. For more coverage, see Page 1, 4-5C.

For photos of Monday's atmosphere in Dallas, see Pages 3A.

Benjamin Patton/
The Gazette





Benjamin Pattery/The Gazette

South Point's Aaron Crumbley scampers 58 yards for a touchdown with 4:51 left in Monday night's game against North Gaston on Friday night. Crumbley ran for 174 yards and three touchdowns as the Red Raiders stunned the Wildcats, 38-35, in one of the biggest games in recent county history.

South Rises Again

Red Raiders clinch a share of conference title, stun Wildcats on home turf

BY PHILLIP GARDNER
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DALLAS — Last year's embarrassing blowout to North Gaston in the rain still stung some South Point players.

When this year's meeting was rained out on Friday, they squeezed in an extra practice Saturday to get ready.

Boy, were they ready.

Aaron Crumbley rushed for 174 yards and three touchdowns and South Point shocked North Gaston with a 38-35 victory Monday in front of an overflow crowd at Truist Stadium.

"Last year they tore us up at home. We had to prove something," South Point defensive lineman Matt Dodge said. "The seniors haven't beat

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■ Huss rallies to beat Jaguars in wild shootout

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Red Raiders can win the outright title if they beat Crest this Friday at Lineberger Stadium.

"It was a big win for us, but we can't worry about this no more," said defensive back Stan Wilson, who recorded at least six tackles to lead the team. "We've got Crest on the schedule next."

The Red Raiders led 38-21 with 4:51 remaining after a 58-yard touchdown run by Crumbley but had to survive a furious North Gaston rally.

en them in a while and we've never won a conference championship."

South Point (9-1, 5-0) clinched a share of the Big South 3A/4A Conference title — its first championship since 2004. The

A.J. Blue scored on a 16-yard run with 2:13 remaining to make it 38-28 and North Gaston's Dominique Carter recovered the ensuing onside kick at the South Point 32. Two plays later, Blue scored on another 16-yard run and North Gaston was in business, down 38-31 with 1:42 left.

South Point recovered the onside kick this time, however, and North Gaston had only one timeout.

The Red Raiders intentionally took two delay-of-game penalties on the next drive in an attempt to burn as much clock as possible. The Wildcats used their final timeout with 46.3 seconds remaining after a 6-yard gain on second-and-15.

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But by the time South Point accepted its second delay-of-game on fourth down, only 3.7 seconds remained. Lowery then scrambled long enough to expire the clock and South Point began its celebration.

"It was a super ballgame with super effort and our kids somehow found a way to win," South Point coach John Devine said.

Chris Lane rushed for 106 yards while Lowery threw for a season-high 157 yards on 7-of-9 passing.

His biggest pass play was a hook-and-lateral in the second quarter. He tossed a short pass to Brandon Spencer, who flipped the ball to Jesse McGaha, who sprinted down the right sideline 60 more yards to the North Gaston 15. That set up a 20-yard James Justice field goal as the second quarter clock expired and South Point took a 17-14 lead into the locker room.

The Red Raiders overcame 180 rushing yards and 142 passing from Blue but held running back Princeton Brooks to 43 yards on 12 carries. Brooks entered the game as the Big South's leading rusher at 173.3 yards per game.

"I guess they felt like the best chance they had was snapping it to No. 9 (Blue), and that's not a bad guess," Devine said.



Benjamin Plattner/The Gazette

North Gaston's Darius Edwards talks with head coach Bruce Clark during the second half on Monday.

North Gaston (8-2, 5-1) now enters its bye date hoping for a South Point loss so it can share the title. The Wildcats will suffer when it comes to playoff seeding. They'll take the Big South's No. 2 3A seed, which will probably translate to one or two home games at most.

"When you fight amongst yourselves as we did, then you beat yourself," Blue said. "We argued. It's a rusty link

to the chain we've got to drop if we've got to keep going and we didn't do that."

SP	7	10	7	14	- 38
NG	0	14	0	21	- 35

First quarter

SP—Aaron Crumbley 1 run (James Justice kick), 4:16.

Second quarter

NG—Princeton Brooks 1 run (Drew Stewart kick), 11:56.

SP—Brandon Spencer 38 pass from Desmond Lowery (James Justice kick), 9:10.
NG—A.J. Blue 5 run (Stewart kick), 8:08.

SP—FG James Justice 20, 0:00.

Third quarter

SP—Chris Lane 66 run (James Justice kick), 8:51.

Fourth quarter

SP—Crumbley 1 run (James Justice kick), 8:36.

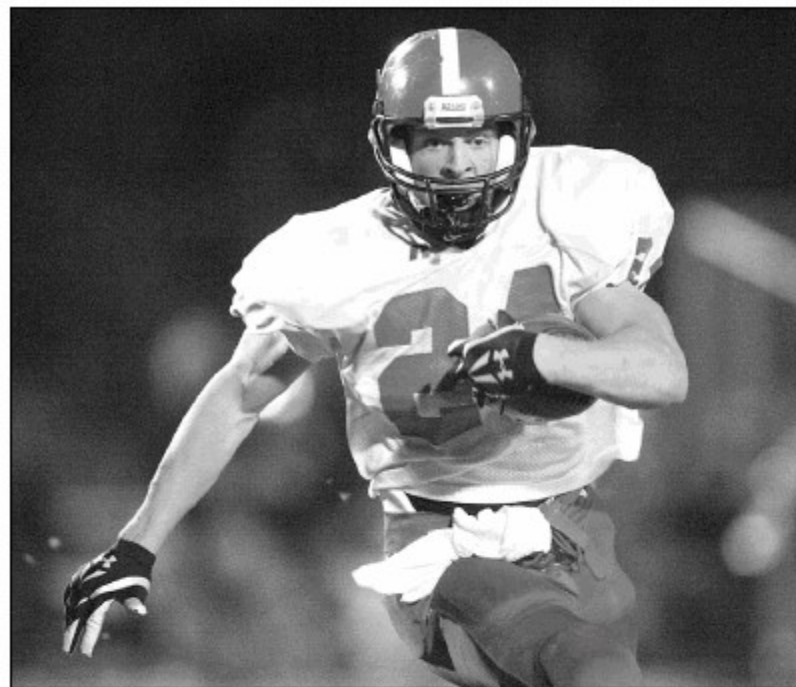
NG—Jordan Potter 18 pass from Blue (Stewart kick), 7:22.

SP—Crumbley 58 run (James Justice kick), 4:51.

NG—Blue 16 run (Stewart kick), 2:13.

NG—Blue 16 run (Stewart kick), 1:42.

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Photos by Benjamin Patton/The Gazette

South Point's Chris Lane carried nine times for 106 yards and caught a 22-yard pass on Monday night.

'They made plays. We made mistakes'

BY DEREK SMITH
Gazette Correspondent

DALLAS — North Gaston's players walked slowly off the field Monday night, disappointed in a comeback bid that fell short and at a chance for an outright conference championship not met.

The Wildcats, who faced 17-point deficits twice in the fourth quarter, then rallied to within a field goal of tying the game, didn't take much consolation in the 38-35 loss to South Point.

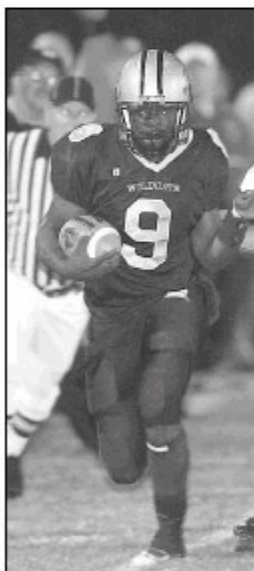
"We should have beaten them — point blank," senior wide receiver Jordan Potter said. "They made plays. We made mistakes."

North Gaston was poised to win the Big South regular-season title and earn the league's top 3A seed into the state playoffs with a victory in the regular-season finale. Instead, now the Wildcats have to wait until Friday night to learn whether they'll share the Big South crown with South Point or be left in second place.

If South Point beats Crest at Lineberger Stadium, the Red Raiders win the conference title outright. Otherwise, South Point and North Gaston will be co-champions with one Big South loss each.

Potter said he didn't have a rooting interest in the game.

"It shouldn't have come



A.J. Blue accounted for 322 total yards, but it wasn't quite enough.

down to that," he said. "Everyone's pretty let down. We should have beaten them."

With the score tied 14-14 late in the second quarter, South Point used a hook-and-lateral play to set up a field goal attempt with 3.2 seconds.

James Justice's 20-yard

kick put the Red Raiders on top 17-14 at halftime.

North Gaston fell behind 38-21 in the fourth quarter before senior quarterback A.J. Blue scored on a pair of touchdown runs in the final minutes to make the game a 3-point difference.

"We played hard in the fourth quarter, but we should have shown that sense of urgency the entire game," Potter said.

Blue, who nearly single-handedly rallied the Wildcats, wasn't satisfied coming up short.

"If anything, we are disappointed in ourselves," Blue said. "We beat ourselves. It wasn't any one person or any one thing. It was a team loss."

Blue did admit to some inconsistent passing on his part. On a few attempts, he either let the ball sail on his receivers or left them short in the turf.

"I made a lot of mistakes," he said. "We all tried hard, but it was tough. We didn't expect it to be a blowout game."

For Blue, Potter and the rest of the Wildcats, the season will resume on Nov. 9 with the first round of the state playoffs.

Brackets and pairings are expected to be released by the N.C. High School Athletic Association Saturday afternoon.