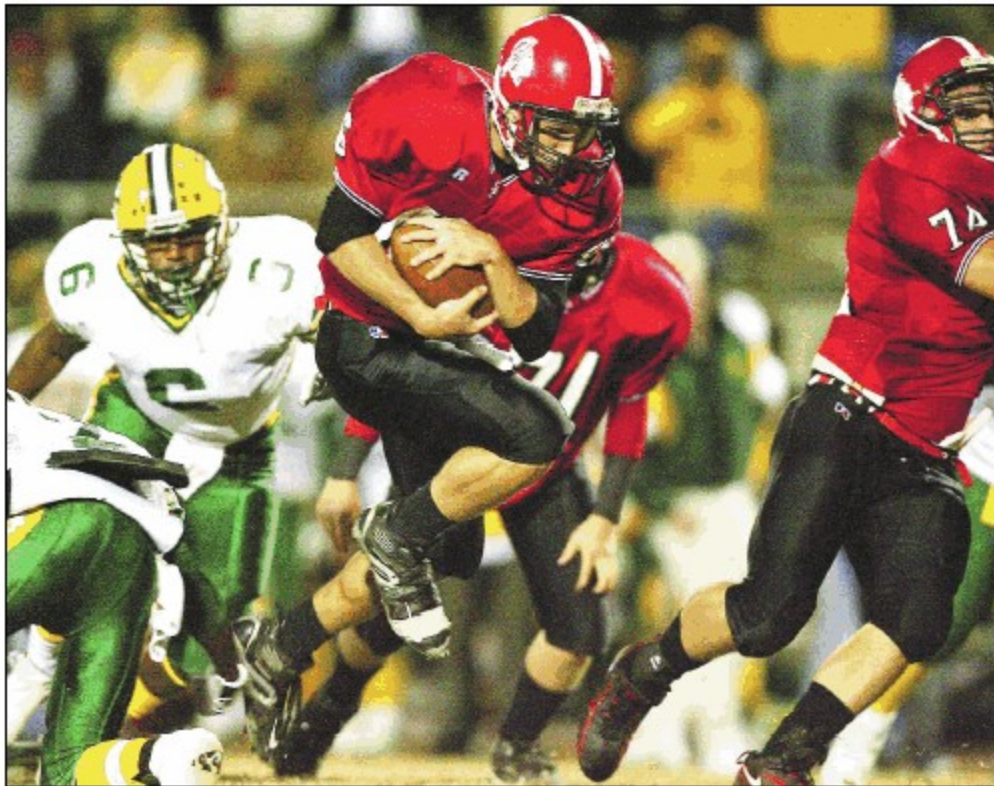


Raiders seize Big South



John Clark/The Gazette

South Point's Aaron Crumbley runs in the first half. Crumbley had eight carries for 39 yards before leaving in the second quarter with a possible concussion.

South Point has chance at the top seed in 3AA tourney

By PHILIP GARDNER
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BELMONT — The conference championship that South Point wrapped up Friday began almost a year ago if you ask Red Raiders coach John Devine.

"This happened December, January, February, March, April and May," Devine said. "This is not an accident. These kids have simply out-worked everybody. They refused to accept not playing for a championship."

South Point held Crest on downs deep in Red Raider territory with 6.2 seconds remaining and walked away with a 21-14 win that gave them the outright Big South 3A/4A Conference championship.

The Red Raiders concluded the regular season with a 10-1 record, including 6-0 in the Big South, and will have a chance at the top overall seed in the 3AA West playoffs when the pairings are released today.

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Quite an accomplishment for a team that was picked fourth in the preseason coaches' poll and went 3-8 last year, including four forfeits.

"We worked hard all summer. All spring we worked hard. I believe we deserved it," said linebacker Daniel Holmes, who recorded a team-high eight tackles, including a sack, to help hold in check a Crest offense that had scored 116 points over the past two weeks.

South Point's defense made its biggest plays at the end with Crest threatening in the final minute.

The Chargers had reached the South Point 10 on a 20-yard carry by Tosh Toms, but it was wiped out by a holding call by an official on the opposite side of the field.

The Chargers picked up 11 yards on the next play to reach the 9 but Holmes and Matt Dodge combined to sack Zac Halbert on second down for an 11-yard loss with 17 seconds remaining.

Halbert then threw two incomplete passes, the first nearly intercepted by Brandon Spencer and the next one tipped in the end zone by Michael Lewis with 6.2 seconds remaining to seal the victory.

South Point was missing center Greg Lancaster and wingback/defensive back Jesse McGaha due to injuries sustained in Monday's game against North Gaston.

To make matters worst, fullback Aaron Crumbley, the team's leading rusher, left in the second quarter after suffering a possible concussion while blocking on a kickoff return in the first quarter.

While he was held out for precautionary reasons, Stan Wilson, James Justice and Nathan Hall filled in admirably. Wilson rushed for 67 yards and a TD and continued to make big plays at defensive back, recording seven tackles.

South Point rushed for a



John Clark/The Gazette

South Point quarterback Desmond Lowery carried 13 times for 63 yards on Friday.

season-low 242 yards, but it was enough.

"Stan, James, Crumbley, Nathan, whoever's in the back, we just know we've got to block for them," offensive lineman Trevor Reeves said. "If we block for them, they're going to run through the holes."

Tosh Toms, Crest's small but elusive running back, gave the South Point defense fits, carrying 21 times for 102 yards and a touchdown.

But Crest punted on its first drive, then gave up a touchdown to South Point on its first possession and played catch-up the rest of the game.

"It was a hard, physical football game," Crest coach Roy Kirby said. "Both teams played hard. Good luck to South Point in the playoffs. I think we're ready to go, too."

C 7 0 7 0-14

SP 7 0 7 7-21

First quarter

SP—Desmond Lowery 5 run (James Justice kick), 7:30.

C—Tosh Toms 16 run (Trevor Austin kick), 1:45.

Third quarter

SP—Chris Lane 59 run (James Justice kick), 10:33.

C—Ryan Black 2 run (Austin kick), 6:57.

Fourth quarter

SP—Stan Wilson 2 run (James Justice kick), 11:21.