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South Point's Desmond Lowery heads to the end zone on one of his four touchdown runs against Asheville on Friday night.

Red Raiders on point

South Point wakes after scoreless half; in Western region final for first time since '03

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BELMONT — Asheville proved that South Point's high-octane offense can be shut down for a half — but not necessarily a full game.

After a scoreless first half, South Point found the end zone four times and took advantage of three Asheville turnovers in a 28-0 win in the third round of the 3A state playoffs.

The Red Raiders (13-1) will take a 13-game winning streak into next week's 3A state semifinal at top-seeded West Rowan,

a 20-16 winner over Winston-Salem Carver.

South Point has reached the semifinal round for the first time since 2003, the year the Red Raiders won it all.

"I'm excited, but we can't look ahead to states," senior quarterback Desmond Lowery said. "We've got to take it a game at a time."

Lowery rushed for 151 yards and all four South Point touchdowns in front of a spirited Lineberger Stadium crowd. He scored on runs of 17, 29, 1 and 10 yards as South Point turned a nailbiter into a sizable final margin.

The Mountain Athletic Conference co-champions shut down South Point fullback Aaron Crumbley to a season-low 30 yards on eight carries one

week after he broke the Gaston County single-season touchdown record with 38.

But that left plenty of running room for Lowery out of the triple-option.

"If they take away one, we've still got two people, so I read what the defense gave me," Lowery said. "They gave me the run, so I took it."

South Point had been shut out only one other half this season, the second half of a 22-0 win over Huss.

WHO'S NEXT?

South Point travels to No. 1 seed West Rowan next Friday night.

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The Red Raiders made sure it didn't last long, engineering a 13-play, 80-yard scoring drive to open the third quarter. The drive took six minutes, 17 seconds and ended when Lowery ran around untouched around the right side for a 17-yard score.

Once the Red Raiders took the lead, defensive ends Carson Ginn and Maurice Falls went to work, making it nearly impossible for Asheville quarterback Brandon Whiteside to run the offense.

"Coach was telling us to watch the screens the first half," Ginn said. "... In the second half, he told us to let loose and we went after them."

After Lowery's first TD, Ginn sacked Whiteside at the South Point 34, forcing a fumble that Rod Williams and Jeremy Hunter pounced on. Four plays later, Lowery scored on a 29-yard run, set up by Jesse McGaha's 35-yard circus catch the previous play.

Two Asheville possessions later, Tydre Crawford intercepted Whiteside at midfield and returned it to the Asheville 8, setting up Lowery's third TD two plays later.

Falls then sacked Whiteside on the next play, forcing a fumble that Allen Lane recovered at the Asheville 14. Once again, Lowery needed just two plays to find the end zone and put South Point in full control.

Until then, Asheville wouldn't go away.

Down 14-0, the Cougars mounted a drive that reached the South Point 41

Red Raiders 28, Cougars 0
Asheville 0 0 0 0 - 0
South Point 0 0 14 14 - 28
Third quarter
SP-Diamond Lowery 17 run (James Justice kick), 5:43.
SP-Lowery 29 run (James Justice kick), 0:26.2
Fourth quarter
SP-Lowery 1 run (James Justice kick), 5:30.
SP-Lowery 10 run (James Justice kick), 4:39.



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South Point's Aaron Crumbley breaks away from an Asheville defender for a first down Friday night.

early in the fourth, but on fourth-and-1, the Cougars came up short on a run by tailback Greg Ray.

"The spot was absolutely horrible," Asheville coach Danny Wilkins said. "I know we got it. I was standing right there. ... That was our last chance."

Lowery completed 3 of 6 passes for 62 yards and directed South Point's offense to 270 yards. McGaha added 17 rushing yards on two carries, Josh Justice ran three times for 12 yards and Chase Cowart caught a 16-yard pass.

The South Point defense recorded its fifth shutout by holding Asheville to 167 yards. Ray was the top yardage gainer with 68 yards on 16 carries.

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South Point's Rod Williams sacks Asheville quarterback Brandon Whiteside.