

Falcons rip up South Point 35-7 to reach state championship



Brad Coville/Special to The Gazette

South Point's Aaron Crumbley runs the football in the first quarter. Crumbley scored on a 19-yard run to give South Point an early lead, but West Rowan took over and ran over the Red Raiders to advance to the state finals.

BY PHILIP GARNER

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MOUNT ULLA — A game that started so promising for South Point ended in stunning defeat.

The Red Raiders scored on their opening possession but provided no more highlights the rest of the way in a 35-7 loss to West Rowan in the 3A West Region final Friday.

South Point (13-2) managed only six yards in the second half,

couldn't find an answer for the Falcons' multiple offense and watched its 13-game winning streak come to a screeching halt one game shy of a state championship appearance.

"We just ran into a buzzsaw," South Point coach John Devine said. "Unfortunately for us, it just didn't go our way."

West Rowan (14-1), which had won a draw over South Point for

WEST ROWAN SOUTH POINT

the top seed in the bracket, advances to the Dec. 13 state title game against West Craven.

The Falcons produced 418 yards out of their multiple offense. Jon Crucitti, the Falcons' jack of all trades, rushed for 80 yards and two touchdowns and caught eight passes for 98 yards. Tailback K.P.

35
7

Parks missed practice all week with a sprained ankle but looked fine on his way to 118 yards and two TDs.

B.J. Sherrill completed 11 of 20 passes for 136 yards — mostly on dink-and-dunk passes.

But it was the Falcons' defense and special teams that turned this one into a rout.

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South Point quarterback Desmond Lowery runs for a gain in the third quarter Friday night as West Rowan's Marco Gupton moves in for the tackle. West Rowan held the Red Raiders to 116 yards — 283 below its average.

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After its opening possession, South Point managed only three first downs. The Red Raiders finished with only 116 yards — 283 below their average — and hurt themselves with untimely penalties and turnovers.

And a sequence of events just before and after halftime proved to be critical.

Seventeen seconds before halftime, West Rowan blocked a Josh Justice punt, and Austin Greenwood caught it off the bounce and took it to the end zone for a 21-7 lead.

Then, South Point muffed the opening kickoff of the second half and West Rowan jumped on the loose ball. The Falcons settled for a field goal, but a roughing the kicker penalty resulted in first and goal from the 4. Parks took it in for a touchdown and West Rowan led 28-7.

For all practical purposes,

a game expected to go down to the wire was over early.

"No one was expecting that," West Rowan coach Scott Young said. "They weren't. We weren't. Our kids weren't. Our coaching staff wasn't. Our kids just played well. And to be quite honest with you, I don't want to take anything away from what our kids accomplished tonight, but I don't think South Point brought their A game."

Quarterback Desmond Lowery got the Red Raiders' offense to a rousing start, picking up 43 yards on South Point's first play of the game to set up Aaron Crumbley's 19-yard TD run moments later.

The early lead was short lived.

"(A state championship) is what our dream's been all four years playing football at South Point, but like coach says, things happen for a reason," Lowery said.

Lowery rushed for a team-high 66 yards, but when the

Red Raiders were forced to punt, he couldn't deliver, going 0-for-5 with an interception. Aaron Crumbley gained 59 yards on 13 carries, including another touchdown to add to his Gaston County record. He finished with 39 for the season.

"It's painful knowing you got this far and not being able to win it," Crumbley said.

South Point will graduate 18 seniors from this team, including 14 starters.

"You don't get everything you want in this world," Devine said, "but we've got 70 Raiders that love each other and that's worth a lot."

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South Point 7 0 0 0 — 7
West Rowan 0 21 7 7 — 35

First quarter
SP—Aaron Crumbley 19 run (James Justice kick), 5:55.

Second quarter
WR—Jon Cruttt 4 run (Matt Turchin kick), 6:40.

WR—Cruttt 31 run (Turchin kick), 1:10.

WR—Austin Greenwood 13 punt block return (Turchin kick), 0:17.3

Third quarter

WR—K.R. Parks 4 run (Turchin kick), 9:18.

Fourth quarter

WR—Parks 14 run (Turchin kick), 8:20.

| | SP | WR |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| First downs | 5 | 21 |
| Rushes-yards | 31-116 | 48-273 |
| Passing yards | 0 | 145 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 0-5-1 | 12-22-1 |
| Fumbles-lost | 3-2 | 1-0 |
| Penalties-yards | 3-19 | 3-25 |

Individual statistics

RUSHING—South Point, Desmond Lowery 11-66, Crumbley 13-59, Josh Justice 3-1, Team 1-minus 1, Jesse McGaha 3-minus 9, West Rowan, Parks 21-118, Cruttt 7-80, B.J. Sherrill 9-42, Tim Flanagan 4-12, Nolan Phillips 2-6, Jeremy Melchor 2-5, Eric Cowan 2-5, Austin Greenwood 1-5.

PASSING—South Point, Lowery 0-5-1, 0, West Rowan, Sherrill 11-20-1, 136; Cruttt 1-2-0, 9.

RECEIVING—South Point, none. West Rowan, Cruttt 8-98, Brandley Horton 2-20, K.R. Parks 1-18, Jonathan Hill 1-9.