

Not enough

Red Raiders' furious rally falls short Friday

By Phillip Gardner
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BELMONT — Tra Latta couldn't have read the last play any better.

The Clover senior linebacker dropped Josh Justice for a 1-yard loss on fourth down with time running out, ending South Point's comeback bid and preserving a 28-21 road victory Friday on opening night for both teams.

South Point (0-1) had reached the Clover 15 when the 6-foot-2, 180-pound Latta burst through the line and took down Justice on fourth and 1 with 19.7 seconds remaining, closing out Clover's 10th straight win against a Gaston County opponent.

"I knew he was going to cut back because that's what he's been doing all night," Latta said. "So when he got ready to cut back, I just met him."

The Blue Eagles (1-0) beat South Point for the second straight season opener, but the rematch wasn't quite the shootout like a year ago. The teams combined for 1,115 yards of offense in last year's 48-42 thriller. This time, Clover still piled up 393 yards out of the double wing, but South Point took a while to get going.



Benjamin Patton/The Gazette

South Point's Aaron Crumbley is tackled by Clover's Trey Childress during their game Friday.

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The Red Raiders went into the locker room with 75 yards—including a net of 0 on the ground.

Still, South Point found its way in the second half and made a game of it despite trailing by 14 with less than four minutes remaining.

After Clover turned it over on downs at midfield, Aaron Crumbley capped a four-play, 52-yard drive with a 10-yard scoring plunge. Maurice Falls was then able to tip Justice's onside kick into the hands of Patrick Truesdale, giving South Point another possession with 2:37 remaining.

The Red Raiders quickly moved downfield, but with no timeouts and the seconds ticking away, they had to hurry on their last two plays and Latta rushed in for the final stop.

"Fans that left early, I sort of feel sorry for them because they missed the best part," South Point coach John Devine said. "Four minutes to go we were dead in the water, and boom, boom, we were right there and had a chance to win. You have to take your hat off on the effort."

Justice, entering his first full season as the starting quarterback, fumbled on third and one but recovered to set up the fourth-down play.

"I don't know what happened. We just didn't get the first down," Justice said.



Benjamin Patton/The Gazette

South Point's Josh Justice rushes during his team's game Friday.

Max Elliott, one of two re-turning 1,000-yard rushers, led Clover with 166 yards and a touchdown on 14 carries. The 5-foot-8, 165-pound senior also came up with a key interception as South Point neared the goal line in the second quarter.

Tyron Douglas, the other 1,000-rusher from a year ago, finished with 77 yards on 13 carries. And junior quarterback Aaron Miller, a Gastonia native who led York-Chester to the 2006 Gaston County middle school football title, rushed for 62 yards and completed 4 of 5 passes without an interception for 58 yards.

"That's a great team we just played," Miller said. "We had to just pull it out. People stepped up and made plays."

Crumbley led the South Point rushing attack with 64 yards and two touchdowns on

12 carries after picking up just seven yards on three carries by halftime. Justice carried 21 times for 41 yards and a touchdown. He completed 9 of 14 passes for 140 yards but tossed two interceptions.

South Point travels to Lincolnton next week while Clover plays host to Ashbrook.

Clo	7777	—28
SP	00615	—21
First quarter		
Clo—Max Elliott 10 run (Jonathan Falls kick), 6:50.		
Second quarter		
Clo—Aaron Miller 9 run (Falls kick), 1:47.		
Third quarter		
SP—Josh Justice 3 run (kick failed), 8:25.		
Clo—Miller 1 run (Falls kick), 6:36.		
Fourth quarter		
SP—Aaron Crumbley 1 run (Justice run), 11:26.		
Clo—Miller 23 run (Falls kick), 6:30.		
SP—Crumbley 10 run (Justice kick), 2:37.		