

# Going to the Hill

Justice runs all over Anson County, leads South Point to state title game Saturday

By Phillip Gardner  
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BELMONT — Josh Justice had never been greeted by so many fans after a game.

The senior quarterback had just accounted for all five touchdowns in South Point's 35-21 West final victory over Anson County, and everybody wanted to tell him the same thing:

Congratulations for reaching the state championship game.

"It really hasn't hit me yet," Justice said. "I feel like it's unreal."

Justice rushed for a career-high 226 yards and four touchdowns and passed for another score, leading South Point (13-2) into the state championship game for the fourth time in school history.

The Red Raiders will face South Johnston (14-1) next Saturday at 2:30 p.m. at Kenan Stadium in Chapel Hill. South Johnston, the No. 1 seed in the 3AA East, beat Southern Nash 33-32 in triple overtime for the regional title.

South Point is 2-0-1 in state title games, having won in 1979 and 2003 and tied Salisbury in 1971 for a co-Western N.C. High School Activities Association title.

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Benjamin Patton/The Gazette

South Point quarterback Josh Justice outruns the Anson County defense for his first touchdown during his team's win Friday. Justice scored four touchdowns and threw another in the Red Raiders' victory. South Point now advances to the 3A state championship to face South Johnston next Saturday.



Benjamin Peters/The Gazette

South Point's Aaron Crumbley tries to break an Anson County defender's tackle during his team's win Friday.

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The Red Raiders have another shot thanks in large part to Justice, a first-year starter who directed South Point's Red Bone offense to 374 yards. He scored on runs of 37, 19, 30 and 40 yards, the last of which gave South Point a 35-14 lead with 4:29 remaining.

"Last week I didn't have a bunch of yards, so I think they kind of overlooked me," Justice said. "Then the offensive line was blocking like never before."

South Point scored on its first four drives of the second half and was stopped only by a fumble and the final horn.

Despite Justice's huge game, the Red Raiders had to hold off a furious Anson County comeback that included two onside kick recoveries. After Justice's third rushing TD made it 28-0 with 11:13 remaining, Anson scored a quick touchdown on an 11-yard pass from Jordan Hildreth to Drew Cole at the 754 mark of the fourth.

Anson recovered the onside kick and scored on its next play, a 45-yard pass again from Hildreth to Cole, just 10 seconds later.

Anson again recovered an onside kick but Carson Ginn forced a fumble on the second play and Tydre Crawford recovered it for South Point, setting up Justice's final TD which all but put the game away.

"I didn't think that they could stop us if we ever got our hands back on the ball," South Point coach John Devine said.

## Inside the game

**Game attendance:** 6,000

**Total yards** — Anson County 450 (163 rushing, 287 passing); South Point 374 (307 rushing, 67 passing)

**Turnovers** — Anson County 5 (3 fumbles, 2 interceptions); South Point 3 (all fumbles)

**Individual leaders** — South Point QB Josh Justice rushed for 226 yards and four TDs and passed for 67 yards and another TD. Anson County QB Jordan Hildreth passed for 287 yards and two TDs and added 64 yards and a TD on the ground.

**State championship game** — South Point will face South Johnston in the 3AA state title game Saturday, Dec. 12 at 2:30 p.m. at Chapel Hill's Kenan Stadium.

"We were just doing what we wanted to do."

South Point forced three first-half turnovers but failed to convert them into points.

Clemson-bound running back Brandon Elerbe fumbled at midfield on Anson's second drive but South Point couldn't advance further than the Anson 41. Anson mounted a threat on its next possession but fumbled at the South Point 30 on a bad exchange. The Red Raiders then went three and out. Anson again threatened but Tydre Crawford made a spectacular one-handed diving interception at the South Point 13 just over a minute before halftime. South Point entered the field house

with a 7-0 lead.

"We stubbed ourselves in the toe in the first half, turnovers and a couple of big penalties," first-year Anson County head coach Luke Hyatt said. "But 7-0 at halftime, we got it back (to start the second half), we're right where we want to be. We didn't stick it in when we came out after halftime. I thought that sort of set the momentum. Next thing you know, it was 28-0."

Anson County finished with five turnovers in all. South Point had three, including the two onside kick snafus.

Justice made it 14-0 early in the third when he ran right, then cut back to the middle for a 19-yard score. On the next drive, Justice hit Ramon Costner in stride on a slant pattern for a 42-yard passing TD. The lead swelled to 28-0 on South Point's next drive when Justice zigzagged through the defense for a 30-yard score.

The Bearcats, looking for their first state final appearance, didn't go away quietly. Hildreth finished with 287 yards and two TDs. The senior also rushed for 64 yards and another score. Anson out-gained South Point 450 to 374.

South Point, which lost to West Rowan in the West finals last year, advances to its first state championship game since 2003, when it beat Northeast Guilford 27-10 for the 3A state title.

An estimated 6,000 fans were on hand at Lineberger Stadium.

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# Two late turnovers help preserve win

By Richard Walker  
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BELMONT — For much of Friday's 35-21 South Point victory over Anson County, it appeared the Red Raiders' defense was going to record its third shutout of the season.

After all, South Point led 28-0 with eight minutes to play.

But then the Bearcats got their passing game and their onside kicking game in high gear and a pair of late turnovers helped preserve the Red Raiders' victory.

"The defensive mindset was hard and heavy," junior end Carson Ginn said. "We knew they had a good passing game. They just didn't show it until late."

There's little doubt about that, as Anson County quarterback Jordan Hildreth completed seven of his 14 passes in the final quarter

accounting for 205 of the his 287 yards.

Against such an aerial assault, South Point sophomore linebacker Patrick Home said his team's strategy was simple: "We just had to keep our cool and realize the game wasn't over."

Of course, turnovers caused or made by Ginn, Home and senior free safety Tydre Crawford in the final 7½ minutes did much to put an end to the Bearcats' rally.

Ginn and Crawford teamed up on the first turnover, as Ginn forced an Anson County fumble on a screen pass at the South Point 20 that Crawford recovered. The play came with South Point leading 28-14 — and just seconds after the Bearcats had recovered their second straight onside kick.

"We just had to keep our minds in the game," Crawford said. "Carson Ginn popped the football out and I just jumped on it."

Added Ginn: "I felt their runner didn't carry it that strong and I was going to try and pop it out. It changed the momentum."

The momentum shift fully changed when South Point took over at the 20 after that turnover and went 80 yards in eight plays to push its lead back up to 35-14 with 4:29 to play.

If that turnover killed Anson County's momentum, the second turnover killed the Bearcats' chance of winning for good.

Anson County responded to South Point's final score with a quick 76-yard drive to nudge within 35-21, then recovered a fumbled Red Raiders' pitch at midfield.

The Bearcats quickly moved to the South Point 14 before Home intercepted a pass near the goal line and returned to the Red Raiders 15.

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Benjamin Patton/The Gazette

South Point's Jalen Porter tackles Anson County quarterback Jonathan Hough during their game Friday. Want more pictures from Friday's game? Check out a video of Friday's victory at [GastonGazette.com](http://GastonGazette.com) and see more this week as the team prepares for the championship.

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"I was in position and he threw it," Home said of his interception. "It kinda just happened."

Crawford said much of the credit for the errant throw had to go to his defensive line's pass rush.

"They got pressure on the quarterback and we were able to come up with the pick there at the end," Crawford said.

South Point's defense was balanced, as seven players had four or more first-hit or solo tackles. Junior linebacker Rod Williams led the way with seven tackles. Home, Crawford, junior cornerback Patrick Truesdale and senior end Maurice Falls added five stops. And Ginn and sophomore linebacker Josh Allman had four hits each.

Home added a forced

fumble and interception. Fall had a forced fumble and fumble recovery. And Crawford had an interception and fumble recovery.

Anson County 00 0 21-21  
South Point 70 14 14-35

#### First quarter

SP — Josh Justice 37 run (Joey Mitchell kick), 9:48

#### Third quarter

SP — Justice 19 run (Mitchell kick), 8:02

SP — Ramon Costner 42 pass from Justice (Mitchell kick), 2:23

#### Fourth quarter

SP — Justice 30 run (Mitchell kick), 11:13

AC — Drew Cole 11 pass from Jordan Hildreth (Beau Melton kick), 7:54

AC — Cole 45 pass from Hildreth (Melton kick), 7:44

SP — Justice 40 run (Mitchell kick), 4:29

AC — Hildreth 7 run (Melton

kick), 3:34

	AC	SP
First downs	16	13
Rushes-yards	38-163	40-307
Passing yards	287	67
Comp-Att-Int	14-24-2	2-6-0
Fumbles-lost	5-3	3-3
Penalties-yards	10-75	4-45

#### Individual statistics

**RUSHING**—Anson County, Brandon Ellerbe 14-64, Hildreth 11-51, Maurice Copeland 6-18, Stephone Anthony 7-30. South Point, Aaron Crumbley 15-60, Justice 18-226, Scott McWhirter 2-9, Ramon Costner 4-7, Troy Leeper 1-5.

**PASSING**—Anson County, Hildreth 14-23-2 287, Anthony 0-1-0 0. South Point, Justice 2-6-0 67.

**RECEIVING**—Anson County, Cole 5-90, Jonathan Hough 5-61, Jackie Polk 2-45, Ellerbe 1-3, Anthony 1-78. South Point, Costner 1-42, Shane Merrill 1-25.