

Red Raiders roll, set up showdown with Crest

By Phillip Gardner

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BELMONT—Now they can think about Crest.

South Point avoided the trap of looking ahead to next week's showdown, coasting to a 42-3 home victory over North Gaston on Friday.

Josh Hice rushed for four touchdowns and South Point returned two of its four interceptions for scores to help the Red Raiders (7-3, 5-0 Big South 3A Conference) clinch at least a share of their fourth straight league title. They can win it outright with a road win next week against the state's sixth-ranked team.

The coaching staff wouldn't dare allow the players to think about that game until after the final horn Friday.

"Every game is the same way," senior lineman Carson Ginn said. "You take off this week, and you're not prepared. You're either getting better or you're getting worse, and we're trying to get better."

The Red Raiders took care of business with a roster missing seven starters or key players. Plenty of playmakers were left behind.

Hice rushed for a career-high 174 yards on 20 carries and scored on runs of 11, 25, 9 and 14 yards. Devan Robbins added 103 yards on 10 carries, including a 20-yard TD run. Jeremy Sanders carried nine times for 42 yards.

Inside the game

Total yards—North Gaston 167 (all rushing); South Point 355 (345 rushing, 10 passing)

Turnovers—North Gaston 5 (4 interceptions, 1 fumble); South Point 3 (3 fumbles)

Next week—South Point travels to Crest for a chance to win the outright Big South 3A Conference title and the league's top playoff seed. North Gaston has concluded its season.

said. "They were excited to be there."

South Point led 28-0 at half-time and 49-0 by the end of the third quarter.

Jerious Ratchford served as North Gaston's workhorse, carrying 19 times for 120 yards. The senior ripped off an 80-yard run down the left sideline late in the second quarter but Jalen Porter tracked him down at the 10 and South Point eventually held. Costner ended the scoring threat with a fourth-down interception near the goal line.

That sequence summed up the game for North Gaston. Nate Potter was intercepted four times, and the Wildcats also lost a fumble. Three of the Wildcats' five offensive series in the first half ended by turnover.

"When you're playing the

times for 42 yards.

The defense got in on the scoring act, too. Patrick Horne, the starting quarterback who added outside linebacker to his duties for the first time this season, took an interception 29 yards into the end zone. And Ramon Costner picked off three passes, taking one of them 34 yards for a TD.

The Red Raiders were missing fullbacks Troy Leeper and Tyler Bray, offensive lineman David Braunscheidel, split end Chase Gibson, and linebackers Jeremy Hunter, Jordan Fomey and Josh Allman. The absences gave some lesser-experienced guys a chance to play, providing one reason there was plenty of intensity against the league's last-place team.

"The guys that were playing tonight, nobody had to tell them to be excited," South Point coach John Devine

defending state champion, you've got to play your best football game and you can't make mistakes," North Gaston coach Josh Clendenin said.

North Gaston avoided the shutout when Trey Beatty kicked a 35-yard field goal with 2:58 remaining.

North Gaston, open next week, ended its season with an 0-11 record. Since playing in the 2007 state championship game, the Wildcats have gone 1-31.

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SOUTH POINT 49, NORTH GASTON 3
North Gaston 0 0 0 3 - 3
South Point 14 14 21 0 - 49

First quarter

SP—Josh Hice 11 run (Dayton Rogers kick), 8:40.

SP—Patrick Horne 29 interception return (Rogers kick), 7:43.

Second quarter

SP—Hice 25 run (Rogers kick), 11:51.

SP—Hice 9 run (Rogers kick), 8:39.

Third quarter

SP—Ramon Costner 34 interception return (Rogers kick), 10:22.

SP—Devan Robbins 20 run (Rogers kick), 6:39.

SP—Hice 14 run (Rogers kick), 0:05.1

Fourth quarter

NG—FG Trey Beatty 35, 2:58.