

Red Raiders growing up

Despite losing 27 seniors, same old South Point impressive in opening win

By Richard Walker

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BELMONT — The recipe for success after losing 27 seniors from a team that spent much of the season ranked No. 1 in the state last season usually isn't in opening the following season against a defending state champion that returns 19 of its 22 starters.

But, at South Point, getting a quick measuring stick on its season was well worth it Friday night as first-time starters Tyler Bray and Jaquan Brooks led the Red Raiders to a 34-21 victory over Providence Day.

Bray, a junior with two years of varsity experience under his belt as a backup to record-setting fullback Troy Leeper, rushed a school-record 42 times for 193 yards and three touchdowns.

Brooks, a sophomore who directed the junior varsity a year ago, became only the third quarterback in South Point history to rush for 200 or more yards with an efficient 19-carry, 200-yard effort that included two touchdowns. Among those scores was an electrifying 70-yard scoring run that gave South Point the lead for good in the third quarter.

"I think we grew up a lot in

INSIDE THE GAME

Offensive statistics:

Providence Day — 324 yards total (64 rushing, 260 passing). South Point — 450 yards total (425 rushing, 27 passing).

Defensive leaders:

Providence Day — Robby Rucho (11 tackles), Daniel Stack (9 tackles), John Carrick (9 tackles). South Point — Daishon Davis (6 tackles, 3 pass break-ups), Donnie Hunter (4 tackles), Deion Jones (4 tackles), Mykel Davis (4 tackles).

Quoting: "He showed how tough and durable he was tonight." — South Point coach Mickey Lineberger on Tyler Bray.

Next week — South Point hosts Lincolnnton, Providence Day visits Victory Christian.

this game and in the second half in particular," said Red Raiders coach Mickey Lineberger, who guided South Point to a 10-1 record last season in his first as head coach. "We played more physical and played with more confidence."

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Tom Ausborne/Special to The Gazette

South Point quarterback Jaquan Brooks breaks into the Providence Day secondary during Friday's game at Lineberger Stadium in Belmont. Brooks and the Red Raiders picked up the opening-night win, 34-21.

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Given the Red Raiders' youth, it was a mild surprise that it could handle the Chargers so easily. Especially when you consider veteran coach Bruce Hardin returned so much experience from 10-2 team that won the N.C. Independent School Athletic Association Division I title a year ago.

Providence Day actually led 21-13 at the half before South Point's adjustments swung the game in the Red Raiders' direction.

For starters, South Point yielded the Chargers a mere 17 second-half offensive plays after getting blistered for 251 yards (209 passing) and three touchdowns in the opening half.

"Our coaching staff has 270 years experience and they make really good

adjustments," Lineberger said. Defensive coordinator "Phil Tate and his staff made some really good ones for the second half tonight."

That unit limited standout quarterback Chase Ferguson 51 second-half passing yards and he finished 20 of 31 for 260 yards overall, including a momentum-changing interception forced by a determined South Point pass rush.

Meanwhile, South Point's "Red Bone" offense clicked off 68 offensive plays overall – and 38 in the second half.

Brooks joins Desmond Lowery (three 200-yard rushing games in 2007-08) and Josh Justice (one 200-yard rushing game in 2009) as quarterback in the Red Raiders' storied history to rush for 200 or more yards.

"He's blessed with so much talent," Lineberger said of Brooks. "He just

needed to get his feet wet and he's going to keep getting better and better."

Providence Day 0 21 0 0 - 21
South Point 7 6 15 0 - 34

First quarter

SP—Tyler Bray 1 run (Aaron Camp kick), 1:28

Second quarter

PD—Mark Brame 13 pass from Chase Ferguson (J.D. Kent kick), 10:28

SP—Jaquan Brooks 20 run (Kick failed), 5:48

PD—Ferguson 1 run (Kent kick), 2:06

PD—Zack Turner 36 pass from Ferguson (Kent kick), 0:06.4

Third quarter

SP—Bray 1 run (Bray run), 6:23

SP—Brooks 70 run (Camp kick), 4:48

Fourth quarter

SP—Bray 3 run (Kick failed), 3:31