

Quick start, big plays lead Raiders to win

By Phillip Gardner
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BELMONT — South Point got the start it wanted, and more importantly the final result it wanted, on the first night of the 3A state playoffs Friday.

The Red Raiders set the tone with a touchdown on the fifth play of the game and went on to a 28-12 home win against Fred T. Foard on a cold night at Lineberger Stadium.

Three players topped 100 yards rushing as South

Point (8-4) won its opening-round playoff game for the seventh time in eight seasons.

The sixth-seeded Red Raiders now turn their focus to a rematch against third-seeded Concord (12-0), which advanced with a 49-7 defeat of No. 14 seed Tuscola.

Concord eliminated South Point in the third round last season, 21-13. South Point leads the series with the Spiders 3-1.

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John Clark/The Gazette

South Point's Ryland Etherton breaks away from Fred T. Foard's Zach Whitfield on his way to the end zone for the first of his two first-half touchdowns during their first-round playoff game Friday night.



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Fullback Ryland Elberton rushed for 147 yards and two touchdowns, quarterback Jaquan Brooks ran for 140 yards and a score, and wingback Tanner Muse added 122 yards and a touchdown on just eight carries as South Point piled up 473 yards of offense out of the triple option.

South Point scored all its touchdowns on big plays as Elberton found the end zone on runs of 41 and 42 yards, Brooks on a 38-yard keeper and Muse on a 76-yard run in which the Clemson recruit reached the edge and then deployed his breakaway speed down the right sideline.

"We've got some explosive athletes," South Point coach Mickey Linberger said. "They saw a seam, a little crease, and it doesn't take much for Tanner, it doesn't

take much for Jaquan, and even Ryland. It's hard to stop all three."

The Red Raiders' offensive total (434 on the ground, 39 passing) represented their third-highest of the season and exceeded their average by 99 yards.

But South Point might have done its best work on defense, holding Fred T. Foard to its lowest point total of the season. The 11th-seeded Tigers (5-6) entered the game averaging 30.9 points but were limited to two scores, both on fourth down — a touchdown just before halftime and another with 1:25 remaining in the game.

"We watch film every single day and we just study, study, study to the point where we know it by heart," South Point linebacker Tyler Hall said.

Foard quarterback Matt Williams completed 11 of 19 passes for 120 yards, including a 20-yard touchdown

pass to Ryan Honeycutt in the right front corner of the end zone with 1:25 left. Williams, one of 27 seniors on the roster, also rushed for 90 yards on 15 carries and scored on a 1-yard run 32.4 seconds before halftime.

"I'm so dang proud of this football team and our coaching staff. We've come a long way," Fred T. Foard coach Tom Harper said. "We were 0-11 last year and now we're 6-6. These seniors have set the foundation for something special and we're going to have to do a lot of hard work to repeat what they've done. I'm proud of them."

South Point received the opening kickoff and scored five plays later on a 43-yard run by Elberton. Midway through the second quarter, Fred T. Foard faked a punt on fourth and 14 from the South Point 49 but Ryan Campbell's pass was broken up by Muse. The Red Raiders quickly took advantage of the short field,

scoring two plays later on Elberton's 42-yard run.

Foard got on the board with a 13-play, 80-yard drive that culminated with quarterback Williams' 1-yard TD run on fourth and goal with 32.4 seconds on the second-quarter clock. The drive featured two key plays by Jacob Schmidt, the first a 10-yard gain on a reception after he hurdled a defender and the second a 23-yard burst through the middle on fourth and 4 from the South Point 27.

The Red Raiders forced a three-and-out to start the third quarter and then took a 21-6 lead five plays later on Brooks' 38-yard TD run. Johnson returned the ensuing kickoff 72 yards but Foard fumbled on the next play, setting up Muse's 76-yard TD two plays later that gave South Point a 28-6 lead at the 6:13 mark of the third.

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South Point 28,

Fred T. Foard 12

Fred T. Foard 0 6 0 6 — 12

South Point 7 7 14 0 — 28

First quarter

SP—Ryland Etherton 43 run (Max Neisler kick), 9:49.

Second quarter

SP—Etherton 42 run (Neisler kick), 6:18.

FTF—Matt Williams 1 run (kick blocked), 0:32.4.

Third quarter

SP—Jaquan Brooks 38 run (Neisler kick), 7:23.

SP—Tanner Muse 76 run (Neisler kick), 6:13.

Fourth quarter

FTF—Ryan Honeycutt 20 pass from Matt Williams (run failed), 1:25.

	FTF	SP
First downs	12	19
Rushes-yards	33-162	42-434
Passing yards	120	39
Total yards	282	473
Comp-Att-Int	11-20-0	3-7-1
Fumbles-lost	3-2	1-1
Penalties-yards	5-40	10-65
Punts-avg.	5-41.4	2-33.0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—Fred T. Foard, Williams 15-90, Jacob Schmidt 14-67, Khalil Green 2-7, Tyler Johnson 1-3, Quentavius Tipps 1-minus 5. South Point, Etherton 14-147, Brooks 13-140, Muse 8-122, Ben Washam 3-23, Nolan Wilson 1-2, Tyler Hall 1-2, Team 2-minus 2.

PASSING—Fred T. Foard, Williams 11-19-0 120; Ryan Campbell 0-1-0 0. South Point, Brooks 3-6-1 39; Muse 0-1-0 0.

RECEIVING—Fred T. Foard, Johnson 3-48, Honeycutt 4-39, Campbell 2-25, Schmidt 2-8. South Point, Etherton 1-16, Davis Ray 1-15, Jeffrey Pearsall 1-8.