

Crest 13, South Point 7

END OF THE ROAD: South Point closes the season at 10-5.

Semifinal sadness

Red Raiders' road to title game stops short vs. stout Crest D

By Phillip Gardner

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SHELBY — South Point's season began and ended with a loss to Crest, but this last one was a far cry from the first.

After taking one on the chin in the opener, South Point had the final possession with a chance to win Friday's 3A state semifinal at Crest's Sid Bryson Stadium. Crest's vaunted defense, though, came up with one final stop as the Red Raiders ran out of time, ending their season with a 13-7 loss.

"They left it all out of the field tonight for each other," South Point coach Mickey Lineberger said. "They played as hard as they could play. It wasn't perfect, but the effort was perfect."

South Point, the No. 6 seed, ends its season at 10-5 after becoming Gaston County's first program to win at least 10 games in four straight years.

Top-seeded Crest (15-0), meanwhile, advances to next Saturday's 3A state championship game in Raleigh against Havelock (13-1), a 35-12 winner over Eastern Wayne. The Chargers will be making their fourth state final appearance in Mark Barnes' five years as coach.

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the Crest 35, but South Point couldn't advance past the 32. After a missed Crest field goal, South Point got the ball at its own 20 but went backward. Then on South Point's final possession after a Crest punt, the Red Raiders had only 1:07 remaining to try to move their run-oriented triple-option offense 77 yards.

"We just tried to get it in our athletes' hands," Lineberger said. "Tried to throw a couple to Tanner (Muse), maybe he can break one. We got Jeffrey (Pearsall) out there using his height.

Crest had rolled past the Red Raiders 35-13 in the opener after leading 35-0 in the third quarter. Fifteen weeks later, much of the talk centered on South Point's improvement since then, especially with an offense that Crest held to 141 yards on Aug. 22. But it was the Red Raiders' defense that kept them in the game this time, forcing one turnover and holding Crest to one touchdown and five field goal attempts.

"13-7 is as good as 35-13," Barnes said. "You have one more than they do, you go to practice Monday and you get to go to the state championship game. I never felt tonight like we were ever going to lose. Even when it was 13-7 and they had the ball, I just never felt like they were going to go drive."

South Point had three possessions trailing 13-7. The first came after a Crest fumble at

Everybody in the world knows that's not our forte."

South Point wound up with 183 yards, including 152 on the ground. The total marked its second-lowest of the season, surpassing only the 141 yards against Crest in the opener.

Quarterback Jaquan Brooks led the Red Raiders with 49 yards on 14 carries, including a 39-yarder in the third quarter that led to Tanner Muse's 1-yard touchdown run. Brooks had been held to two yards on 15 carries in the first meeting and again had a tough time finding any openings in the Crest defense other than the one long run.

Muse, a wingback who didn't play offense in the first meeting, rushed for 37 yards on 11 carries. Fullback Ryland Etherton ran 13

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times for 38 yards. Wingback Ben Washam tied a season-high with nine carries, gaining 28 yards. Brooks completed 5 of 8 passes for 31 yards.

Crest finished with 260 yards (147 rushing, 113 passing), including 155 rushing yards by Tre Harbison. The 5-foot-11, 210-pound junior scored Crest's only touchdown on a 69-yard run on the first play of the second quarter. Crest also got a pair of first-half field goals from Alex Trejo covering 34 and 29 yards, the latter on the last play of the second quarter for a 13-0 halftime lead.

South Point then pitched a shut-out for the second half.

"Our defense played outstanding," said Muse, a Clemson commitment at safety. "It starts at the front and ends at the back but we did a great job up front putting pressure on the quarterback. We did a great job containing. We slipped up one play but most of the night, I felt like we controlled the defensive side of the ball."

South Point will graduate 16 seniors from this team, which gave the Red Raiders a fourth state semi-final appearance in 13 seasons.

"It's heartbreaking," South Point senior linebacker Yale Loucks said. "... We played (together) from Pee Wee to now. We saw 2009, we saw 2003 win state championships, and we thought we were going to make it there. We came up short."



Ben Earp/Halifax Media Service

South Point's Tanner Muse is brought down by Crest's Aaron Ramseur during Friday night's game at Crest.

Crest 13, South Point 7**South Point** 0 0 7 0 — 7**Crest**3 10 0 0—13**First quarter****C**—FG Alex Trejo 34, 6:36.**Second quarter****C**—Tre Harbison 69 run

(Trejo kick), 11:47.

C—FG Trejo 29, 0:00.**Third quarter****SP**—Tanner Muse 1 run

(Max Neisler kick), 3:34.

TEAM STATISTICS

	SP	Crest
First downs	10	13
Rushes-yards	48-152	36-147
Passing yards	31	113
Total yards	183	260
Comp-Att-Int	5-8-0	12-18-0
Fumbles-lost	2-1	1-1
Penalties-yards	6-53	12-90
Punts-avg	3-21.7	2-33.0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS**RUSHING—South Point,**

Jaquan Brooks 14-49, Ryland

Etherton 13-38, Muse 11-37,

Ben Washam 9-28, Jeffrey

Pearsall 1-0. **Crest,** Harbison

26-155, Traquan Hopper 1-9,

Preston Huskey 2-7, Willie

Green II 6-minus 1, Team

1-minus 23.

PASSING—South Point, Brooks5-8-0 31. **Crest,** Green II

12-17-0 113; Team 0-1-0 0.

RECEIVING—South Point,

Muse 3-21, Washam

2-10. **Crest,** Hopper 4-51,

Tyshun Odom 5-42, Quentin

Thompson 1-29, Harbison

1-6, Green II 1-minus 15.