

Muse's INT return cements Raider win

By Michael Hughes
Special to the Gazette

BELMONT — Junior linebacker Nick Muse's 44-yard interception return was the winning play for South Point in Monday's 35-34 win over West Charlotte at Lineberger Stadium.

In a resumption of Friday's game that was postponed after almost a quarter of play following some weather delays, Muse stepped in front of intended receiver Jacory Reaves, found a seam, and reached the end zone standing up with just 38.9 seconds to play. With regular kicker Thomas Lempereur out with strep throat, freshman kicker Cade Ratliff was called in from the junior varsity for relief duty and nailed his fourth point-after kick in four tries for what became the eventual winning point.

But West Charlotte wasn't ready to quit. Starting at their own 36-yard line after the kickoff, Lions quarterback Isayah Cole completed three passes to the 6-3 Reaves, who out jumped defenders on two of his receptions, including an acrobatic, 2-yard TD catch with bodies draped around him, that brought the visitors within one as time expired.

The Lions went for two and the win, but receiver Terrance Gaston was gang tackled and stopped short on an attempted left sweep to paydirt.

"I was expecting that," South Point coach Mickey Lineberger said of the conversion attempt by West Charlotte. "We played toe-to-toe, knockdown drag-out, and they got an opportunity to win it right there. I probably would have done the same thing."

Muse, the younger brother of Clemson defensive back Tanner Muse, credited his coaches for putting him in the right location and telling him what to look for on the play.

"I just listened to my coach," Nick Muse said. "He told me to drop. I knew where to go because I knew where the ball was going [to Reaves]. It was hard to cover him, but somehow we found a way."

"I got lucky with my pick. [My teammates] had a hole wide open for me, and I just took it."

Reaves finished the two nights with eight catches for 141 yards and two touchdowns. West Charlotte's other fine receiver, senior Xavier McKoy, had six receptions for 120 yards and another two TDs. Reaves and McKoy helped Cole complete 18-of 27 passes for 307 yards and four scores, but the Red Raiders

for 667 yards and four scores, but the Red Raiders (2-2) had two huge interceptions, capped by Muse's theft in the last minute.

"Our guys rose to the occasion and made a great play," Lineberger said. "I was very proud of them. We've played four non-conference games, and all of them have won at least three state championships. We sure haven't played any cupcakes.

"No. 5 is as good as any receiver we're going to see, and No. 9 is as good as any receiver we're going to see. The [Lions'] quarterback can throw it where he wants to."

After a quick first quarter ended with the score 7-7, both teams scored once in the second to go into half-time knotted at 14. South Point QB Diontreia King's 32-yard scamper to the end zone came with 2:14 left in the quarter.

The Red Raiders were up 21-20 after three quarters of play before both teams reached the end zone

>> See **RAIDERS**/Page 3C

<< Raiders

Continued from Page 1C

twice in the climactic fourth.

Senior fullback Ryland Etherton was the workhorse for South Point with 169 yards rushing on 30 carries and three big scores.

"We beat a fine football team that's got a very rich history," Lineberger said. "We didn't play good Friday night. I'm glad we had a second chance [Monday night], because we needed it."

The Red Raiders have an open date this Friday before hosting rival East Gaston on the 25th to open conference play.

WEST CHARLOTTE AT SOUTH POINT

West Charlotte 7 7 6 14 — 34

South Point 7 7 7 14 — 35

First quarter

WC — Xavier McKoy 19 pass from Isayah Cole (Roman Crawford kick), 8:25.

SP — Ryland Etherton 3 run (Thomas Lempereur kick), 4:31.

Second quarter

WC — McKoy 32 pass from Cole (Crawford kick), 3:58.

SP — Diontrea King 32 run (Cade Ratliff kick), 2:14.

Third quarter

SP — Etherton 26 run (Ratliff kick), 5:44.

WC — Quintin Mickerson 1 run (run failed), 2:00.

Fourth quarter

SP — Etherton 1 run (Ratliff kick), 9:26.

WC — Jacory Reaves 36 pass from Cole (Terrance Gaston run), 7:13.

SP — Nick Muse 44 interception return (Ratliff kick), 0:38.9.

WC — Reaves 2 pass from Cole (run failed), 0:05.

	WC	SP
First downs	17	16
Rushes-yards	36-152	49-242
Passing yards	307	19
Total yards	459	261
Comp-Att-Int	18-29-2	2-3-1
Fumbles-lost	4-1	2-1
Penalties-yards	12-125	1-10
Punts-avg.	0-0	3-30.67

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — **WC**: Quintin Mickerson 20-87, Terrance Gaston 9-69, Isayah Cole 4-4, JaQuan Tobias 1-1, No. 43 1-0, Jacory Reaves 1-minus 9. **SP**: Ryland Etherton 30-169, Diontrea King 13-68, Ometrick Leeper 3-8, Ty Tinker 2-4, Nolan Wilson 1-minus 7.

PASSING — **WC**: Cole 18-27-2 307, Mickerson 0-1-0 0, Gaston 0-1-0 0. **SP**: King 2-3-1 19.

RECEIVING — **WC**: Reaves 8-141, Xavier McKoy 6-120, No. 18 2-31, Tony Gaston 2-15. **SP**: Wilson 1-24, Etherton 1-minus 5.