

Tested but triumphant

Red Raiders need clutch stop to send West Rowan packing

By Jack Flager

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BELMONT — In the first half of South Point's third-round playoff game against West Rowan on Friday night, the Red Raiders offense spent most of the time standing on the sideline.

A deliberate, methodical Falcon offense kept the ball out of South Point's hands, as West Rowan built a 14-7 lead at the break and held South Point to only two drives, running 38 plays to South Point's 21.

On the final defensive snap of the game, South Point's offense once again stood on the sidelines — the result completely out of its control. This time, the South Point defense came through.

West Rowan had just come down to score a touchdown with 6.9 seconds to play when quarterback Kacey Otto found Korteze Weeks in the corner of the end zone. Down a point, the Falcons lined up to go for two and the win.

Senior running back Ryland Ethern — who ran for 151 yards on 24 carries — thought briefly that his football career could be over.

"I was praying. You never realize
what your last play is going to be,

>> See **RED RAIDERS**/Page 5C

<< Red Raiders

Continued from Page 1C

because I don't know if I'm playing football in college after this or not," Etherton said. "That really hit me right there. You can't take any play for granted."

Otto was flushed out of the pocket. A South Point defensive line that was knocked back on its heels early relentlessly chased after the Falcons senior quarterback. As Otto ran out of room on the sideline, he desperately tossed a throw to the end zone, but it was batted down by South Point sophomore Jake Alexander.

The Red Raiders (12-2) earned the 28-27 win, survived to play another game and will host No. 8 Kings Mountain in Belmont on Friday night with a trip to the state final on the line.

Senior defensive lineman A.J. Alverson said after the late touchdown, he was hoping to get one more chance to keep his team alive on the two-point conversion.

"I'm hoping they go for two, man. I'm wanting to stop them. I don't want to go



South Point's Diontreia King runs around the edge for a 19-yard touchdown during the Red Raiders' 28-27 win over West Rowan on Friday night in the third round of the 3A state playoffs.

James Sipes/
Salisbury Post

into overtime. I just want to get this game done and finish it. I want to get this win — that's it," Alverson said.

Otto threw the ball on the late touchdown, but the Falcons senior quarterback was tough to handle on the ground for the Red Raiders all night. He rushed 23 times for 70 yards, including a score, and converted two

key fourth-down conversions in the first half as West Rowan went 3 for 4 on fourth down tries in the first half to extend drives and keep the ball away from South Point.

"They're big and physical, that quarterback was a doggone load and they got 300-pounders up there blocking for him," said South Point coach Mickey

Lineberger. "It makes it tough. Our kids' character was tested and we rose to the occasion."

In the second half, the Red Raider defense got three consecutive stops — including at J.T. Starr interception — to turn the momentum of the game. Ether-ton ran in a 1-yard score early in the third to tie things up, then Diontreia King (13 carries, 91 yards) and Nolan Wilson (six carries, 34 yards) added scores to make it 28-14.

West Rowan had one final push in it, scoring twice in the final 6:36 to cut the deficit to one before the decisive 2-point conversion stop.

Lineberger said he had confidence in his team to step up in a big spot.

"I turned around and told them we're going to win the game. They're going to line up and go for two. They were tickled to death about it," he said. "We're blessed for four more quarters to play next Friday right here."

Kings Mountain, the No. 8 seed, earned a 28-13 victory over No. 12 Hibriten to advance to the west regional final. Kickoff time next week is 7:30 p.m. in Belmont.

WEST ROWAN AT SOUTH POINT

West Rowan.....7 7 0 13 – 27

South Point.....7 0 13 8 – 28

First quarter

WR – Kortez Weeks 7 pass from Kacey Otto (Austin Morrison kick), 10:08.

SP – Nolan Wilson 3 run (Thomas Lempeurer kick), 5:37.

Second quarter

WR – Otto 4 run (Morrison kick), 0:14.8 .

Third quarter

SP – Ryland Etherton 1 run (Lempeurer kick), 8:34.

SP – Diontreia King 19 run (kick failed), 2:31.

Fourth quarter

SP – Wilson 12 run (Etherton run), 9:10.

WR – Juwan Houston 29 pass from Otto (Morrison kick), 6:36.

WR – Weeks 5 pass from Otto (conversion failed), 06.9.

	WR	SP
First downs	15	13
Rushes-yards	45-173	44-277
Passing yards	112	0
Total yards	285	277
Comp-Att-Int	9-19-2	0-1-0
Fumbles-lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties-yards	3-30	7-69
Punts-avg.	1-34.0	3-28.0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: **SP** – Ryland Etherton 24-151, Diontreia King 13-91, Nolan Wilson 6-34, Mario Brandon 1-1; **WR** – Jovon Quarles 17-75, Kacey Otto 23-70, Martavio Rankin 5-28.

PASSING: **SP** – King 0-1-0, 0; **WR** – Otto 8-18-82, Quarles 1-1-30.

RECEIVING: **SP** – none; **WR** – Juwan Houston 3-46, Kortez Weeks 3-42, Jai Hogue 2-24, Rankin 1-0.