



South Point's Matthew Robinson runs into the end zone for a touchdown after recovering a blocked punt against Shelby on Friday night at South Point High School. (JOHN CLARK/THE GASTON GAZETTE)

South Point caps undefeated season with win over Shelby

BELMONT — On one of South Point's first offensive plays Friday night, left tackle Larry Dowdy and Shelby line-backer Dax Hollifield hit each other and got tangled up for an extra moment or two after the whistle blew.

It wasn't a dirty play, there was no late hit by either player and no flags on the play. In most ways, it was a forgettable snap. But it indicated something important for South Point early in the game. Things wouldn't be the same as they were last year. South Point was not about to get physically outmatched, and the Red Raiders were not intimidated by the four-time defending state champion Golden Lions.

"The coaches have been telling us all week that we need to be physical and play until the whistle blows," Dowdy said.

After suffering a 24-0 loss in Shelby last season, it was South Point that came out with the early punch to set Shelby back on its heels this

time around when Matthew Robinson blocked a punt on the Golden Lion's first possession and ran it back into the end zone to put the Red Raiders up 7-0 with 10:31 left in the game.

Then, South Point's first offensive possession, Jake Alexander ran up the middle and into the end zone from 56 yards out. Less than five minutes into the game, it was 14-0 South Point, and the Golden Lions were never able to fully recover as the Red Raiders earned a 35-15 victory at home.

"It definitely did give (the offense) momentum," Robinson said of the special teams score. "When you have that on offense that's a big factor, especially against a good defense like Shelby has."

The Red Raiders led 21-3 at the halftime break and scored on their first possession of the second half when Scottie Lee ran in a 52-yard touchdown to make it 28-3. Coach Adam Hodge said he was proud of his team's resolve to not let up after taking the early lead.

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SOUTH

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“I told them we’ve got to be tough — not just physical toughness, but mental toughness because they’ve got a good football team. They’re going to score some points and stop you a time or two,” he said.

Shelby scored on a 56-yard touchdown pass from Malik Sarratt to Xavier Brooks with 8:52 to go in the third quarter, and Brooks brought back a 95-yard kick return for a score midway through the fourth. But the Golden Lions never cut the deficit to fewer than 20 points, falling to 9-2 on the season and 4-1



South Point's Edward Haley, 41, is congratulated by Nathan Hamilton after sacking Shelby quarterback Malik Surratt on Friday at South Point High School. [JOHN CLARK/THE GASTON GAZETTE]

in Southwestern Conference play.

Alexander led the South

Point rushing attack with 120 yards on 16 carries. He was one of four players — along

with Lee, Keaton Hale and Ray Grier - to find the end zone as South Point totaled 337 yards on the ground.

South Point (11-0, 5-0) locked up the top seed in the 2AA state tournament, and will host playoff games as long as it keeps winning in the playoffs.

"You want the road to Chapel Hill to go through those red goalposts," Hodge said. "No matter where you play you need to play your dead-level best. You could play in a cow pasture, you still need to play hard."

The NCHSAA will announce the state tournament pairings Saturday.

Jack Flagler: jflagler@gastongazette.com.

Twitter: @jflagler



South Point's Jake Alexander intercepts a pass in the end zone at the end of the first half against Shelby on Friday night at South Point High School. [JOHN CLARK/THE GASTON GAZETTE]

Score By Quarter					
	1	2	3	4	F
Shelby	0	3	6	6	15
South Point	14	7	7	7	35

Scoring Summary:	
	First quarter
	SP - Matthew Robinson 15 yard blocked punt return (Cade Ratliff kick), 10:31
	SP - Jake Alexander 56 run (Ratliff kick), 7:41
	Second quarter
	SP - Ray Grier 36 run (Ratliff kick), 11:50
	Sh - Chase Hendrick 26 field goal, 4:27
	Third quarter
	SP - Scottie Lee 52 run (Ratliff kick), 11:21
	Sh - Xavier Brooks 56 pass from Malik Sarratt (kick blocked), 8:52
	Fourth quarter
	SP - Keaton Hale 8 run (Ratliff kick), 6:50
	Sh - Brooks 95 kickoff return (conversion failed), 6:35

Team Stats:			
		Shelby	South Point
	First downs	14	13
	Rushes-yards	33-79	42-337
	Passing yards	188	0
	Total yards	267	337
	Comp-Att-Int	19-36-1	0-3-0
	Fumbles-Lost	0-0	3-1
	Penalties-yards	8-50	6-65

South Point individual stats					
Rushing					
Name	Att	Yards	TDs		
Jake Alexander	16	120	1		
Ty Tinker	3	22	0		
Scottie Lee	11	95	1		
Keaton Hale	8	69	1		

Keaton Hale	8	62	1		
Ray Grier	3	44	1		
Caleb Gibson	1	-6	0		
Passing					
Name	Comp	Att	Yards	TD	Int
Scottie Lee	0	2	0	0	0
Keaton Hale	0	1	0	0	

Shelby individual stats					
Rushing					
Name	Att	Yards	TDs		
Xavier Brooks	15	63	0		
Malik Sarratt	14	0	0		
Zandre Cherry	1	8	0		
Jaylon Scott	2	4	0		
George Dunlap	1	4	0		
Passing					
Name	Comp	Att	Yards	TD	Int
Malik Sarratt	19	36	188	1	1
Receiving					
Name	Rec	Yards	TDs		
Malik McMullens	2	9	0		
Zandre Cherry	4	27	0		
Xavier Brooks	4	79	1		
Santana Eaves	5	48	0		
Tarvaris Scott	1	2	0		
MJ Allen	1	7	0		
Jordan Brown	1	1	0		
Fabian Pettis	1	15	0		