



Gazette photo by Mike Sargent

Statesville defenders bat away a Jeff Williams pass
...from South Point receiver Todd Armstrong

Williams' heroics pace Raiders' win

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Special to The Gazette

An frequently-heard cliché that has been credited to Yogi Berra is "It ain't over 'till it's over."

That's what many South Point Red Raider fans must have been saying Friday night at Lineberger Stadium, as senior quarterback Jeff Williams led a brilliant Raider comeback and South Point defeated the Statesville Greyhounds, 8-7, in the first round of the state 3-A playoffs.

The Raiders staged a brilliant comeback — and brilliant may a worthy superlative to describe the events that transpired in the final five minutes of the game.

Statesville had the ball and was moving up field, eating precious seconds off the clock. That is when, on a second-and-eight, Greyhound quarterback Terry Bellamy dropped back to pass, attempting to get the ball to one of his backs, just past the line of scrimmage. South Point's Boone Davis read the play and picked the pass off and returned the ball to the Statesville 41. The play came with 4:15 remaining in the game.

On the first play, South Point tried to run off tackle, but Chip Gibson was dropped at the line of scrimmage. On the next play, Williams spotted one of his favorite receivers, fellow senior Tim Rector, free along the left sideline. Williams then coolly fired the ball to Rector, who caught it at the Statesville eight and then lowered his head and entered the end zone, completing a 41-yard TD strike.

Raider Coach Jim Biggerstaff then elected to call time out to plot the strategy for the two-point conversion, going for the win in a hotly-contested defensive battle. Williams kept the ball, going off left tackle and twisted his way into the end zone, leaping into the air with the go-ahead two points with 3:23 remaining to play in the contest.

It was then up to the Raider defense to hold the big Greyhound team. And rise to the occasion the defense did. Jim Lamberth advanced the ball three yards, fumbled and Davis came up with the loose ball.

South Point then just had to let the time, which suddenly became an ally, roll off the clock. The Raiders then picked up one first down, and Statesville used its three time outs to try to get the ball back for a last-gasp attempt at getting on the score board.

The Greyhounds got the ball on their own 21 with 39 seconds remaining in the game. Statesville then dug deep into their play book, pulling out a double-reverse flea-flicker pass. The play didn't fool South Point's Terry Sutton, who read the play beautifully and nailed Lamberth all the way back at the Greyhound 10. A desperate incompleting pass stopped the clock with 12

seconds remaining, and then Williams, who doubles as the team's safety, picked off Statesville's last hope, a deep post-pattern pass.

Williams returned the ball to the Raider 15 as time expired, much to the delight of the South Point fans, who comprised the majority of the nearly 7,000 fans present.

"I was on the sidelines, and I told the Lord that I wanted to catch the ball more than I ever wanted anything," said Rector following the game.

Rector had to lower his head to get into the end zone, but he felt that he could make it the rest of the way.

"I never even thought about dropping it," continued Rector. "I saw the goal line and thought I could make it. This is the happiest moment of my athletic career."

"That's the first time we've run the play in a game," said Williams, who split Rector's numbers with the pass. "We've been practicing it, but that's the first time we've ever used it in a game."

A Raider fumble gave Statesville the break it needed to put its seven points on the board. On South Point's second play from scrimmage, the ball squirted loose, and the alert Greyhound defenders quickly jumped on the ball, recovering at the South Point 48.

Blackburn-bulled his way into the secondary, breaking three tackles and racing down the right sidelines for a 37-yard touchdown. Scott Conger's point-after-touchdown split the uprights, and Statesville led 7-0 with 8:08 remaining in the first period.

It then became a defensive battle from that point. "At halftime, we tried to get our mistakes straightened out," said Biggerstaff following the game. "We then tried to build our confidence. The score was only 7-0, and we were still in the game and we knew that we were going to win."

"They may not be big physically, but those kids have big hearts. In fact, they have the biggest hearts," concluded Biggerstaff.

South Point missed an opportunity to score early in the fourth quarter when Greyhound punter Mark Miller fumbled the snap, and South Point downed him at the Statesville seven. The Greyhounds buckled down, however, giving Perry Fewell but two yards on the first play, and then two solid plays by the Statesville secondary battled away Williams passes in the end zone.

The Greyhounds utilized a strong ground game to kill most of the clock, controlling the ball nearly eight minutes in the third quarter, not allowing the Raiders to get their

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hands on the ball for a scoring opportunity. But each time the Greyhounds would push the ball near the Raider goal line, the South Point defense would rise to the occasion and thwart the drive, keeping the Raiders within striking distance and finally giving the offense the break it needed.

South Point finished the game with 114 yards rushing in 37 attempts. The Raiders got nine first downs in the contest. Williams only completed two passes, the big one to Rector and

another for 14 yards to Chip Gibson, giving him 55 yards in the air. The Greyhound secondary picked off one Williams pass. Williams, who also handles the punting duties, booted four for a 34.5 average. All four were high, towering kicks that didn't allow Statesville much of an opportunity for a return.

Statesville out-rushed the Raiders, getting 148 yards in 49 carries, trying to use the ball-control concept. The Greyhounds didn't complete one pass, however, and the alert Raider secondary picked off three Statesville passes. There was only one penalty,

that one for 15 yards early in the game against Statesville.

South Point will now have to hit the road, traveling to Waynesville to take on Tuscola. Tuscola defeated North Buncombe Friday night, 22-8, to advance in the playoff picture. There was one upset in 3-A action Friday night, as number-one ranked Farmville Central fell to Ahoskie, 17-14, in eastern play.

The Raiders played their last game in Lineberger Stadium for the season, as they will be on the road for the remainder of their state title quest.

High school

Statesville	7	0	0	0	- 7
South Point	0	0	0	8	- 8

Scoring Summary

S Blackburn 37 run - Conger kick
 SP Hector 41 pass from Williams
 Williams run

	Statesville	South Point
First Downs	11	9
Rushing	49-148	37-114
Passing	0-7-3	2-15-1
Yards Passing	0	55
Fumbles Lost	2	1
Punting	2-37 0	4-34 5
Yards Penalized	1-15	0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

STATESVILLE RUSHING - Bellamy 4-6
 Brown 1 for -10 Blackburn 25-135 Lamberth
 18-50 Conger 1 for -25 Miller 1 for 10

SOUTH POINT RUSHING - Williams 15-12
 Fewell 9-60 Jones 1-18 Gibson 6-17

STATESVILLE PASSING - Bellamy 0-5-2
 for 0 Brown 0-1-1 for 0 Lamberth 0-1-0 for 0

SOUTH POINT PASSING - Williams 2-15-1
 for 55

SOUTH POINT RECEIVING - Gibson 1-14
 Hector 1-41

