

January 24, 2024

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SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - There are many ways to measure the talent of an individual high school basketball team on the court. After all, that's what statistics and analytics are for. But there are things just as important that every basketball coach wants to see from his team and those can't be measured with any type of statistic or machine.

Hustle, effort and grit are just as important when evaluating a team's performance and not many teams can match the Southwestern Randolph High School boys basketball team in those areas.

Although SWR coach Matt Kiser would certainly like to see that hustle result in more wins, the Cougars give opponents quite a battle each and every time they step on the basketball floor.

"I'd like to say I hope we're a team that when people show up to play us, they know they are going to get our best effort, they are going to get a team who plays tough defensively, plays unselfishly and they are going to play a team with discipline," Kiser said.

The Cougars are doing just that as they won their third straight game Tuesday night with a 66-55 win over North Moore in non-league play. With recent wins over Wheatmore and Uwharrie Charter, SWR's league record is now 3-3.

"It's really no secret and I'm sure other coaches use this, but you can always give a perfect attitude," Kiser said. "That's the only area in basketball you can be perfect in every night. There's no excuse for not having a perfect attitude. The two things you can control on a basketball court are attitude and effort. Some nights, that shot might be off, but you control your attitude. You can't control the whistles, but you can't let that affect your attitude and effort."

SWR, at 6-12 overall, is scheduled to return to conference action Friday at Trinity. That 6-12 record could be much better, but three three-point losses in the season, including one to Randleman, has kept the Cougars in the second tier of the league.

"I think a successful season varies from year to year within your own program," Kiser said. "We have had seasons where we may consider it a success where you had less wins in other seasons and we've had more wins in seasons where it might not have been as successful as seasons with less wins. A lot has to do with where you start and where you finish. Whatever we feel our ceiling is, we want to overachieve. "



Kiser said he and his staff have spent years instilling a confidence to overcome adversity and be mentally and physically tough on the basketball floor. With players like Nathan Ellis, Marcus Robertson, Brayden Chapman, Grant Kirk, Kenan Sugg, Julian Mosley and others, those characteristics are shining in the Cougars' effort every game.

"We lost six players last year, all seniors, all very important," said Robertson, a senior who leads the team in scoring at 16.8 points per game. "We knew coming into this season we had to be tough. That starts in practice. If you're not diving on the floor and the other team is, that just shows the other team wants it more. We push each other in practice every day. We had a rough start, but we're getting there. We are going to get there."

Those on the team this year are continuing a history of sorts from former players like Chris Hardin (2020 graduate), Parker LaPlant (2020) and Shawn Adkins (2023), players who epitomized the importance of hustle, effort and grit while wearing a SWR uniform.

"You can play with grit and determination and get through adversity whenever it hits through a course of a game because it is coming," Kiser said. "No one has gone through a game without seeing adversity.":

With a positive attitude, extra effort and pure grit, the Cougars are certainly meeting adversity head on each and every time they take the floor.