



March 29, 2021

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SportsTone.net

RAMSEUR - When the key game to earn a high school football conference championship is late in the season, the team first has to get to that point. Getting to that point this season hasn't been easy for any team.

But Eastern Randolph had jumped over hurdles and cleared every obstacle on its way for a chance to win the Piedmont Athletic Conference championship.

The Wildcats have battled on and off the field throughout the season, including a quarantine because of Covid-19 and four league foes to get to Friday night's battle with undefeated Randleman. The winner of that contest will earn the top seed from the PAC for the upcoming state 2-A playoffs.

It hasn't been an easy road for the Wildcats, who are a perfect 4-0 heading into Friday night's clash.

"The biggest thing, and this goes back to the quarantine, they understand that nothing is guaranteed this year," ER head coach Burton Cates said. "They know they are very fortunate to get to play on Friday night or whenever. They know it could be their last game."

The Wildcats' last game was their first home game this season.

"Something has been taken away from them, they love to play on Friday night and they love to play in Ramseur," Cates said. "The kids want to get everything they can out of it."

So far, the Wildcats have done just that. ER opened with a 22-14 win over Providence Grove and followed that with a 49-0 win over Jordan-Matthews, a 30-12 win over High Point Andrews and a 42-8 win over Wheatmore. RHS defeated PG by seven, Wheatmore by 49, Jordan-Matthews by 50 and HPA by 24, very comparable winning margins between the two schools.

"It's kinda eerie how the scores have been," Cates said of the two teams' wins over common opponents. "But our kids were focused last night on winning that game because that got us a playoff spot. Now the winner of Friday night will get a No. 1 seed."

In all, the Wildcats have scored 143 points and surrendered just 34 in their four victories. ER's offense is loaded with Stratton Barwick assuming control at quarterback. He has a pair of deadly receivers in Tennessee-signee Kaeman Marley and Osiris Ross. Naheim Lilly is one of the top running backs in the area.

"Offensively, we're getting better each week," Cates said. "We had questions on the offensive line and we're getting there. The offensive line is getting better and better."

"On defense, we still have some questions and deficiencies and we're trying to get things worked out, Cates added. "The biggest concern is maybe our size across the defensive line."

Cates pointed to the play of Davonte Brooks and Delonte Glover as key performers.

The biggest surprise this season, Cates said, was the ability to start the season successfully. ER was quarantined after just one practice.

"You go back and look at our PG game and we had seven practices leading up to that game and you have to have seven practices before you play," Cates said. "We Zoomed every night and we got things done. I never thought that would happen. Those were two weeks when we couldn't do anything on the field."

Now the Wildcats have worked their way to where they hoped when the season first started.

"Needless to say, it's a 64-49 game." Cates said, referring to cars being parked from Highway 64 to NC 49. "We tell our seniors this is a night they will remember for the rest of their lives."

As it will be for plenty of fans of both teams.