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By Dennis Garcia
SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - There are going to be plenty of distractions this week as the Asheboro High School Blue Comets renew one of their oldest rivalries as they welcome crosstown rival Southwestern Randolph to Lee J. Stone Stadium for one of the most anticipated games on each team's schedule.

The Blue Comets will not only have to contend with a Cougars team that is hungry after suffering a lopsided loss to Albemarle last week - the same Albemarle team Asheboro defeated for its only win this season - but the Blue Comets are also managing all the festivities that come with Homecoming as well as debuting a new Jumbotron at the stadium.

"Our guys are fine," AHS Calvin Brown said of everything leading up to the game. "We are going about things normal. All that extra stuff is for the fans. Everyone there is for a football game. We are focused on what we are doing."

The Blue Comets, like SWR, are coming off a big loss as Randleman recorded a 53-14 win over AHS just as Albemarle was recording a 32-6 win over SWR.

"With our quarterback and athletes, I hope there are some things we can take advantage of," Brown said. "But you know Coach (Seth) Baxter and his staff are working on ways to slow us down."

The Cougars' secondary was repeatedly beaten on the long pass last week as Albemarle threw for 354 yards, mostly on go-routes where the receiver just beat his defender down field and ran under a high, looping pass. Baxter said the quick, athletic AHS team must be "licking their chops" after watching what Albemarle was able to accomplish in their win.

"Asheboro throws 30, 35 times a game, they have the same athletes on the field and it will be a tremendous battle for us to withstand those types



Southwestern Randolph
High School

of athletes," Baxter said. "I was worried about their (Albemarle's) athleticism. Their skill people ran right by us. It was go route after go route after go route and they got past us. We are going to have to get things fixed."

The Blue Comets hold a big advantage in the rivalry, but it's the Cougars who have dominated lately. The series began in 1993 with Asheboro winning the first 10 games. The Cougars earned their first win in the series in 2003, but the Blue Comets won the next 16 in a row for 26 wins in the first 27 games. AHS has scored at least 40 points eight times and went through a five-year period (2013-2017) in which they outscored the Cougars 243-78.

However, SWR captured victories in the rivalry the past three seasons, winning 20-7, 17-7 and 40-2 last year. Overall, AHS holds a 26-4 advantage with shutout wins in 2007, 2008 and 2016. Last year's two points were the lowest AHS has scored in any game in the series.

SWR opened this season with wins over Western Guilford, North Moore and McMichael before falling last week.

AHS opened with a win over Albemarle, then battled Eastern Randolph tough before falling 27-16. PG topped AHS 24-14 in Week 3 and Randleman rolled to its win last week.

AHS will attempt to mirror Albemarle's success in the passing game against SWR with quarterback Logan Loughlin and wideouts Elijah Woodle, Amari Godwin and Aiden Robinson.

The Cougars have been rotating four quarterbacks into their system this season, but all are going to need time to throw, should the Cougars elect to put the ball in the air.

"I feel they are doing that because each kid brings something different," Brown said. "It shouldn't pose a problem. Our defensive coaches have devised a game plan and who is at quarterback shouldn't affect that game plan."

Owen Whelen leads a stout interior defense for the Cougars

Game time is 7:30 p.m.