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ASHEBORO - With the Southwestern Randolph High School varsity football team using as many as four quarterbacks and a like number of running backs each game, the offense is certainly expected to be spread around. Perhaps that's why Nathan Ellis' performance in Friday night's 32-13 win over Asheboro is even more remarkable.

The senior scored five touchdowns on just 15 carries in leading the Cougars to their fourth straight victory over their crosstown rivals. Ellis rushed for 110 yards, while Owen Whelan had 16 carries for 86 yards, Jentezen Cox 15 carries for 89 yards and Colton Law six carries for 10 yards.

The victory moves the Cougars to 4-1 entering Piedmont Athletic Conference play, as SWR heads to defending champion Eastern Randolph Friday night.

But first there was some celebrating to do.

"I probably watched the game on film five or six times," Ellis said. "Friday night, I couldn't barely sleep. I was thinking about it all night long. I was ecstatic. It puts a big smile on my face."

Ellis, who saw the Blue Comets strike quickly when quarterback Logan Laughlin hit Elijah Woodle for a 62-yard scoring strike on their very first play, helped the Cougars respond when he took an inside handoff and scampered 13 yards to cap a 58-yard drive with 3:19 left in the first quarter.

Ellis capped a scoring drive the next time SWR had the ball with a 4-yard run for a 14-7 lead. His 1-yard TD run pushed the SWR lead to 20-7 at halftime.

"We thought it was our game at halftime, we were confident, but we knew we had to keep our heads up because they scored on just one play," Ellis said.

Ellis added an 38-yard TD run around left end with 7:44 left to play and a 25-yard scoring jaunt with 2:28 left to seal the win. The Cougars had dropped 26 of 27 to AHS in the series before the four-game winning streak.



*Southwestern Randolph senior Nathan Ellis.  
Photo by PJ Ward-Brown, Randolph Record.*

Ellis said he has scored three touchdowns in a game, but never five.

"I thought it was very unique, very special," SWR head coach Seth Baxter said. "Nate is a great kid who is more athletic than people give him credit for. We try to get the ball in his hands as much as possible. His knowledge and intelligence ... Each of them has a unique skill set which makes them a little different and It takes kids who are unselfish and want to be successful for this to work."

Ellis, who barely leaves the field as he starts on offense, defense and most special teams, said he understands the share-the-wealth philosophy.

"I love it because not all eyes are on you," Ellis said. "As long as it works. I know everyone wants to get the ball every play, but we do what we gotta do to win."

Ellis was a key part to a Cougars' secondary which held the Blue Comets at bay for most of the night. One week after Albemarle burned the Cougars continuously with deep passes, SWR faced a similar problem with the athletic Blue Comets. But after the first long pass, AHS could muster little else deep.

"All we heard all week was don't get beat deep, don't get beat deep, screaming, really," Ellis said. "After the first one, I was like, you are kidding me. How did we let that happen? But coach (James) Needham just told us to forget about it and keep playing. It was all mental after last week. It was all mental focus. Do your job."

They all did exactly that.