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ASHEBORO - There are some high school basketball players who are strong with the basketball and there are some who have a lightning-quick burst to the basket. Others are strong rebounders, some can shoot from anywhere on the floor, some can thread passes inside the paint to teammates and others provide a stifling defensive effort every game.

Southwestern Randolph High School senior guard Caressa King is all of these.

One of the most gifted athletes in the area, King excels on the basketball court in all phases. And she's proven that time and time again.



Southwestern Randolph senior Caressa King. Photo provided.

"You talk about five tool players in baseball, she plays defense, she rebounds, she shoots transition shots, she passes the ball, she handles it in pressure and she can knock down the perimeter shot," SWR coach Seth Baxter said of his four-year starter. "When you can do all those things consistently and successfully, that's dynamite."

And she's been doing it since she stepped on the SWRHS campus as a freshman. Baxter said he knew how important it would be to have her on the floor even at a young age.

"You can't teach speed and you can't teach athleticism and the thing about her is that she can dribble the ball faster down the court than a lot of girls can run back in transition," Baxter said. "When you can do that,. you're special. She's so talented in the open court. She makes good plays and is exactly like having another coach on the floor."

The Cougars have had plenty of success prior to King arriving and she has certainly helped to keep a strong winning record intact. SWR had four straight winning seasons and eight of nine winning campaigns before King arrived. In King's freshman season, the Cougars were 7-6 during the

shortened pandemic campaign, improved to 20-6 her sophomore season and SWR is coming off a 19-9 mark from her junior campaign. Entering Tuesday's scheduled game with South Davidson, SWR is 2-1 this year.

"Always look toward the basket and always be confident," King said of her approach this season. "Practice hard and work hard."

Against Asheboro last Friday, that work ethic led to an impressive showing as she nailed a 3-pointer, dribbled through the AHS defense on a baseline drive to score, flipped a quick pass underneath to Kenzie Martin for a layup, chased down a long pass from down the floor and recorded a layup and grabbed a rebound, instantly turned and drove the length of the floor for an easy two points before the Blue Comets' defense ever got set. And that was all in the first quarter. She finished with 19 points and didn't even step on the floor for most of the second half, a game the Cougars won 66-30.

"I'm handling the ball more, bringing it up more," King said "It makes me have to always be on my toes. I really feel comfortable with this group. We did a lot over the summer and we have adjusted to each other because of that exposure."

Her speed and quickness is quite evident on the defensive end of the floor.

"Our defense has created a lot of our offense and with her being able to get steals and those steals turning into layups, she gives you that presence," Baxter said.

King said she still heeds the advice she heard from Baxter as a freshman.

"He took me in and taught me everything," King said. "Keep my head up, never give up and strive for excellence."

That most definitely has been reached.