

SPORTS



George Cox
Sports editor

Little by little

In sports as well as in life, confidence is a vital catalyst that can turn failure into success. The secret is how to develop this precious ingredient which comes in many different forms.

Earlier in this prep football season, South Brunswick didn't possess the necessary confidence to win big games. But following a tough non-conference schedule, which included four 4A teams and a highly-ranked 2A Clinton squad, Cougar coach Derrell Force's patience finally paid off.

Little by little, the Cougars found they could play with anybody, even though they lost their first three games before whipping Laney at home.

Before the season, Force sold his players on the idea that playing one of the state's most ambitious schedules would pay dividends by the time conference action began.

With that schedule, players knew their first wins might not come early or easily. However, with improvement, Force said, the Cougars would be ready to play the tough Waccamaw 2A/3A Conference schedule.

Any team on South's non-conference schedule -- New Hanover, Hoggard, Laney, Pinecrest or Clinton -- would have a difficult time in the Waccamaw. That's how strong the league has become.

It's taken Force and his revamped staff just a year and a half to turn the Cougar football program around. The improvement has developed from a lot of places -- in

See Cox, page 2C

THE THRILL OF VICTORY



Photos by Ed Harper

The Cougars celebrate following their win at South Columbus Friday. A win Friday at Pender could set up a showdown against West Brunswick for the conference championship.

Cougars make a 'splash'

South wins crucial defensive struggle, 12-8, to remain in the playoff hunt

By George Cox
Sports Editor

It didn't matter to the South Brunswick Cougars that the football field was soaked with water.

They made a splash en route to a big conference win over

South Columbus.

Coach Derrell Force's team ignored conditions from their first play to the final horn -- winning a crucial defensive struggle, 12-8, to keep the Cougars in the Waccamaw 2A/3A Conference regular-season title chase.

For the second straight week, Force called for a short pass on

the Cougs first play from scrimmage.

And for the second straight week, it worked -- this time for an 81-yard aerial strike from quarterback Keven Brown to runner-receiver Izesta Brown, who caught the missile ten yards down the sideline before zipping into the endzone.

"We did it last week and it was successful for us, and they (South Columbus) didn't have last week's film," an elated Force said after the game.

"We felt like we could throw and thought they would be overloading our tightend," said Force. "They didn't and instead put somebody over there. But Keven threaded the needle and Bam (Izesta) made a great catch and run. Bryan Bracey and Prince Bryant made great blocks for him."

That early score applied an enormous amount of pressure to the methodical, ground-oriented Stallions' offense which couldn't get on track until the second half trailing 12-0.

The Cougars (3-1, 5-4) scored their second touchdown in the second quarter after Jason McDowell recovered a South Columbus fumble on the Stallion 29-yard line.

Six plays later on a third-and-seven play from the enemy 13-

See Splash, page 4C

Celebrate Biggest win since 1986 victory over Whiteville

By George Cox
Sports Editor

As South Brunswick coach Derrell Force talked about the school's biggest win since the Cougars beat Whiteville, 13-12, in 1986, his players were doing some unusual celebrating.

They had just beat veteran coach Jack Holley's South Columbus Stallions, 12-8, to keep their playoff and conference championship hopes alive.

Some were having a great time in the slosh -- running down the sidelines, making head-first slides after yelling and screaming in the after-game huddle.

"Coach Little," Force bellowed. "Get them off the field." The last thing the Cougar coach wanted was a freak injury in the midst of celebration. But it was obvious the triumph was his biggest since taking the Cougar job in 1994.

"I just can't say enough about our kids' effort tonight," he continued. "The kids played hard with a lot of emotion and a lot of intensity."

"It was just a great ball game -- the kind the spectators ought

See Celebrate, page 2C

North slides

Homecoming
Friday against
Red Springs

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Two touchdowns in the second half helped pull North Brunswick back from a 10-0 deficit, but it wasn't enough as Bladenboro held off the pesky Scorpion attack Friday, 17-12.

For the second-straight week, the Scorpions (5-3, 2-3) under second-year coach Garry Bishop missed a chance to tie the school record with its sixth win. North will try to reach that mark Friday when Red Springs travels to Leland for a homecoming game.

It was a game of big plays as the Bulldogs (6-2, 4-1) compiled 226 yards against a North defense that had ranked as one of the stingiest in the conference.

Instead, Bladenboro poured on the defensive pressure when it had to, stopping four North drives that had reached inside the ten-yard line to secure the victory and possible state playoff spot from the Three

See North, page 4C



An interception leads to a struggle in the mud for this Cougar player and defender in Friday's 12-8 game.