

## Greene Will Play Friday

Written by Mike Kelly

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Despite a badly sprained ankle, Watauga High senior Ethan Greene will start at quarterback Friday night against Mooresville in the Class 4A Western Quarterfinals. Greene, who finally practiced with the team on Wednesday, led the Pioneers to their first playoff win in four years last Friday night as he hooked up with Ethan Poulos

on a 28-yard scoring strike with 7:37 left in the game in a 14-10 victory against Alexander Central. Alex Fox set the stage with his team-leading third interception.

"I was hoping to score a touchdown on the play," Fox said. "But the play put our offense in good field position. And Greenie did the rest. It was a big win, especially for our seniors"

And now the Pioneers (7-5), who also registered their first winning season since 2007, must play a Mooresville team that's loaded with tradition. Despite an 0-11 season two years ago, the Blue Devils (10-2 and members of the I-Meck Conference) have bounced back under second-year coach Hal Capps, who knows how to build a winning program. He led Western Alamance, where he coached for 18 years before coming to Mooresville, to four consecutive Class 3A state championship games before he won the title in 2007.

Ironically, Capps also played on the Burlington-Williams team that lost to WHS in the state championship game in 1978 at old Conrad Stadium in Boone.

"Watauga has always had well-coached teams," he said. "I'm not surprised we're playing them Friday night. The big key to their success is their coaching staff. They've done a great job putting players where they can be most effective. I'm real impressed with Watauga."

And if the Pioneers, who are huge underdogs in Friday night's match up, can pull off a win, they would host either Hopewell or Sun Valley in the Western Semifinals November 18.

"And our guys know that," said WHS coach Tim Pruitt. "We feel we have a good game plan going into this game. We know they have an aggressive defense, and that they like to blitz a lot. They also play three different defenses. We just have to recognize what they're in."

The Blue Devils, the No.2 seed in the western pod and the No.5 seed in the western regional, have only given up 194 points this season. They're led Charles Wilkes and Deandre Coleman, who anchor an aggressive front line, and linebacker Scott Markofski, who leads Mooresville in tackles. Offensively, the Blue Devils are blessed with speed and more speed. Quarterback Donte Black is actually listed as an athlete. He averaged eight-yards a carry last season running out of the wildcat, and he's been clocked at 4.31 seconds in the 40-yard dash. Running back Dee Tomlin is a 1,000-yard rusher, and the Blue Devils are loaded with depth at the skill positions.

As a matter of fact, they're so deep at the skill positions that senior Brandon Jones, who ran for a 1,000 yards last season, has been moved to the secondary this year.

"And Brandon has been real mature about it," Capps said. "It's tough not getting the ball 20 times a game like he did last year. But he knew we were young in the secondary, and he played back there as a sophomore. So he had the experience, and he put the team first."

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This is WHS's fifth trip to the Western Quarterfinals, dating back to 1977. And the Pioneers are 4-0 in quarterfinal games. They defeated Central Cabarrus in 2007 at the old Jack Groce Stadium.

"It's great to be in this position," Greene said following last week's game against Alexander Central. "No matter what happens now, we've clinched a winning season. But we've been counted out all year, and we've proven people wrong all season. It's nothing new. It's just a new challenge."

"And this team likes a challenge," Pruitt said. "These guys have done a great job. we're playing a team that a lot of people would have on their radar as a contender for a state championship. We're a resilient group. I'm just glad we're not facing this team deeper in the playoffs. They may not be fully focused, and they might be looking ahead a little bit."

Our coverage begins at 6:30 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

**NOTES:** Offensive lineman Will Critcher was involved in a traffic accident Wednesday morning. He suffered a minor injury, and according to Pruitt will not play Friday night. The Pioneers will replace him with Everett Broschinski on the offensive line. But Dustin Ward, who was a starter at the beginning of the season, and Adam Goetz, who has moved up from the JV team, will see some playing time as well Friday night, according to Pruitt.....Tight end Clint Trivette, who visited Brevard College last weekend, will play Friday night. He does not have a broken right hand as was first feared. X-rays were negative. His right hand is badly swollen, but he will have it wrapped and will play against the Blue Devils....Linebacker Will Morgan, who sat out last week's playoff opener with a concussion, has practiced all week and will play Friday.....This is the first meeting ever between the Pioneers and Mooresville.....But the coaches, Tim Pruitt of WHS and Hal Capps of Mooresville, have faced each other before when Pruitt was an assistant coach at Starmount and Capps was coaching at Western Alamance.