

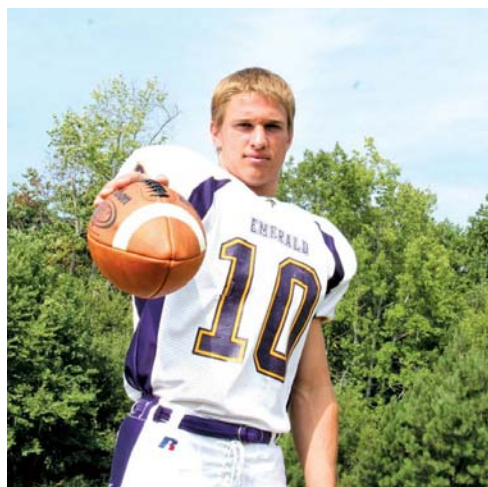
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Sports

Newton Adds Defense, Special Teams to Duties As Vikings' Quarterback

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Emerald's Zane Newton is a starting quarterback who contributes on defense and special teams for the Vikings. (Staff photo by T.M. James)

The fact Emerald High School football player Zane Newton played quarterback for the Vikings last week came as no surprise. The fact he played on defense and special teams in addition to taking nearly all the snaps was a bit of a head-turner. Newton, in his senior year, has become a do-it-all workhorse for the Vikings, and despite suffering a shoulder injury in Emerald's season-opener against Greenwood, he has played in every game in some sort of capacity.

In a 43-23 loss to Abbeville last week, Newton completed 16-of-29 passes for 131 yards and had a 31-yard touchdown run. He also had a team-high 13 tackles for the Vikings while playing free safety. "He did everything last week," Emerald coach Mike Clowney said. "I have never seen a kid go out and do as much as he did with that effort that he gave Friday night. "If I had a son and I wanted him to be like somebody, I'd want him to be like Zane."

Clowney said Newton came off the field just twice in the game, both times to repair his helmet. Newton's determination to be a part of every play comes from knowing he only has a few more opportunities to make an impact. "I won't lie to you, I get tired, but it's my senior year," Newton said. "I got to play. I want to

play, so I'm just trying to help my team as much as possible. "It's my senior year, so it's all I got."

On the season, Newton has 554 total offensive yards, plus 30 tackles and two tackles for loss. Newton's aptitude for tackling on defense isn't entirely surprising considering the success he's had as a wrestler. He's won back-to-back Class AA titles at 145 and 152 pounds, respectively, and will be a strong favorite for a third consecutive win in February.

At his playing weight of 170 pounds for football and under 6-foot, Newton has been able to use his skills as a wrestler to compensate for his relatively small frame. "I think it helps with me being a little undersized," Newton said. "I know how to use leverage and size and get lower than most people. "That's the reason I can tackle some people."

His experience as a wrestler also helps him to maintain his endurance playing nearly every down for the Vikings. "Wrestling, you start every practice with a 45-minute run and then you go and wrestle for another two hours," Clowney said. "So as a wrestler, he's been able to build that motor to where if you wrestle, and you bust your butt doing it, then you can get at it in football season. "Wrestling is the toughest sport I've ever done."

After injuring his shoulder in August, his second-straight season-opening injury after he broke his collarbone last year, Newton made it clear he could be useful in other areas. Newton lined up at slot receiver and running back in Week 2 against Ninety Six, and he first played on defense Sept. 19 against Ware Shoals. His amount of playing time at free safety has increased each week. "It's just one those things where he's talked about it since I've been here, you know, "Hey coach, let me play some defense, let me play some defense," Clowney said. "But he's been our quarterback, so your first intuition is we're not going to put our quarterback on defense. "Then once he

got hurt that opened it up for us to try him as some different places.”

Regardless of where he’s on the field, Newton hopes he’s setting an example of the right way to play. “I think mostly I’ve been there for the rest of the team, trying to keep them hyped,” Newton said. “As a senior, I’ve learned all these years that leadership is my main role.”