



Times Photo by Joey Gardner

Running back Laron Powell had many big plays for Snow Hill.

Eagles break through

■ Snow Hill rallies from 14 down to earn its first state semifinal under coach Griffin

■ Snow Hill 41, Elkton 24

By Jay Hodgkins
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BERLIN — The Snow Hill football team just wasn't satisfied.

The Eagles weren't satisfied with a third straight appearance in the 1A East region final, weren't satisfied with 10 wins in 11 games in a breakthrough season, and certainly weren't satisfied with falling behind 14-0 early to Elkton on Friday night.

After storming back from a 10-point second-half deficit for a decisive 41-24 win against the visiting Golden Elks, the Eagles stormed into the state playoffs for the first time under coach Stan Griffin.

"You are East region champions," Griffin told his team after the game. "Are you satisfied yet?"

The answer was a resounding "No!"

But before Snow Hill could start getting prepared for playing host to a 1A state semifinal next Friday, the Eagles had to scramble when Elkton's strong-armed senior quarterback, Ryan Asti, threw a perfect fade to Chad Richardson late in the first quarter for a 7-0 lead, followed just minutes later by a 65-yard Stephen King punt return to put the Golden Elks up 14-0 with

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SEAHAWKS' SEASON ENDS



Photo by Dave Hoffman

Stephen Decatur receiver Spencer Tillman runs into the Joppatowne secondary Friday night. The Seahawks, though, lost the 2A East region final 30-24.

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11:02 left in the second quarter.

To that point, Snow Hill's vaunted running game had been stymied by a tough Elkton defense, while the Eagles had no answer for Asti's pinpoint throws moving the Golden Elks offense along smoothly.

But the 14-point deficit awoke an Eagles team that had twice before had its season ended in the regional finals.

"It's the third year we've had the championship game on our field, and we didn't want to crown someone else on our field again," Griffin said.

That's not why Ben Tate came to Snow Hill, either.

The star back, who has given a verbal commitment to Auburn University, burst untouched through a gaping right-side hole for a 53-yard sprint into the end zone, and Snow Hill was back in the game.

But Asti was still giving the Snow Hill defense fits, and following a long run into Snow Hill territory, the big senior dropped back under heavy pressure and, after appearing to go down with a sack, popped back up to launch a 40-yard strike to a wide-open Jack Wolf with just more than four minutes left in the half.

Down 21-7, Snow Hill still looked in danger of having to overcome a daunting halftime deficit, but Raymond White's

bomb in stride to a streaking Laron Powell with 1:58 left in the half brought the game to a workable margin, as Powell outran two defenders for the last 20 yards of the 60-yard connection.

The Eagles' regional final curse still looked like it might get worse before it got better, though, as on the first play of the second half a White pass ricocheted off Tate's hands right into the waiting palms of an Elkton defender, who took the ball deep into Snow Hill territory. However, the turnover only resulted in a 45-yard field goal and a 24-14 Elkton lead.

Little did Elkton know, but that was the end of the good times for the celebrating visiting crowd.

The Eagles responded to adversity with a methodical, pounding 80-yard drive in which the only big play was another big White connection to Powell. The senior quarterback through a perfectly spiraled rainbow deep into the left corner of the field, and Powell found his way under it at the 2-yard line, where White then snuck the ball in with two minutes remaining in the third quarter.

By this time, the Eagles defense had figured out the Golden Elk attack, and after Powell picked up a fumble forced by Tate, Snow Hill's biggest playmaker quickly gave the Eagles their first lead of the night.

Tate showed why many con-

sider him one of the top player's in the state when he took a hand-off directly up the middle, only to be met by several Elkton defenders. After bulldogging his way single-handedly through three Golden Elks, Tate sprinted home for a 34-yard touchdown run and a 28-24 lead.

It was home free from there for the Eagles in the fourth quarter, as a Tate interception with six minutes to play was followed by a clock-melting drive in which the frustrated Golden Elks lost their composure with three straight personal fouls to allow Snow Hill to march down the field and get the game-icing score with 2:26 remaining.

Powell, White's main passing target on the night, even got to punctuate the night for the Eagles when, just trying to run out the clock, the diminutive back sprung out from the line for a 60-yard touchdown run with seconds left on the clock for the final score.

"There is nothing I can call you guys other than champions," Griffin told his team after the game. "We beat a good football team tonight," Griffin said. "They came in here 9-2 and played well. (The Eagles) played hard. They fought real hard tonight and came back.

"It's been a crazy, crazy year."

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