

With season on line, Cole Brannan comes up big

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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CARROLLTON – It's fourth down with about four-and-a-half minutes to go in regulation. **Carrollton** was down 22-20 and deep in its own territory. The Hawks line up in punt formation and the season was on the line.

In stepped **senior Cole Brannan**, who made a couple of moves to get to a pass thrown by Jerrett Smith. Brannan made a nice catch, made a couple of moves and found himself racing to the end zone on a 80-yard catch-and-run that sent the Hawks into the IHSA Class 1A quarterfinals, where they'll face LeRoy, shock winners over top-seeded Tuscola, on the road next weekend (the IHSA will announce the date and time Monday afternoon).

“Derrick Smith said we could fake it (a punt) because the middle was wide open and I was on it 100 percent,” Brannan, who also had touchdown catches of 20 and 14 yards in the first half, said. “I said I'd cut behind Alex Bowker (a Hawks running back) to the middle of the field and he threw a perfect ball. Once I caught it, there was no one near me. It was awesome.”

Once Brannan gained possession, there was no stopping him; he took off, got past a Indian defender and took off to the Pawnee end zone with the Hawks fans cheering him with delight.

There was some tension going into the play, knowing that their season was likely on the line. “We've been there before,” Brannan said. “Week 2 against Mendon Unity, we had to make plays and we did then too, so we're going to continue to keep doing it.”

Carrollton won the game over Pawnee by a final 28-22 tally. So now the Hawks find themselves into the quarterfinals against LeRoy, who shockingly eliminated Tuscola, the Southern No. 1 seed in Class 1A, 20-13 Saturday. “We played them last year, and they're going to be tough,” Brannan said. “They were tough last year and it should be a very good game.

“They never give up; we're going to have to go up there and play four quarters again.”



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[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)