The Watauga High basketball teams earned a split on Friday night at the Octagon in Newland.

The WHS women, who defeated Avery in convincing fashion in their season opener on November 23, snapping a four-game slide against the Vikings, blew a 12-point lead in the second half and lost to Avery 58-49. The Vikings (1-4), who finally cracked the win column, reverted to a full-court press in the third quarter that sparked their comeback.

“Give Missy (Lyons, Avery’s coach) a lot of credit,” said WHS coach Klay Anderson. “She could have sat back in a zone, and it would have allowed us to maintain control of the game. Instead, she gambled and pressured us, and we started making mistakes. In turn our offense went cold in the second half,”

WHS only scored 16 points in the entire second half. Ironically, it was Avery that was anemic in the first half offensively. The Pioneers methodically built a comfortable lead in the first half, but couldn’t pull away. The Vikings, who missed their first ten shots to start the game, fell behind 9-0 in the opening stanza. Freshman Lauren Burleson finally snapped the cold spell with a bask et at the 3:51 mark.

But the Pioneers maintained control. They owned an 18-7 lead at the quarter break, and were up 33-23 at the intermission. But the Vikings staged a huge comeback in the third quarter, outscoring WHS 18-8 in the period,, tying the game at 41.

“We really lost control of this game in the second quarter,: Anderson said. “We had several chances to break the game open. We led by 12, but we wasted some scoring chances that could have pushed the lead out to a 16-or-18-point advantage.”

Megan Tennant, playing her first game of the season (she sat out the first three games of the year with an injury), put Avery on top to stay with 6:47 left in the game. She hit a layup and was fouled on the play by Emily Alford . Tennant made the free throw and that three-point play gave Avery a 44-41 advantage.

Mercedes Bentley and Tennant paced the Vikings. Bentley had 15 points on the night, and she was 13-15 at the foul line; Tennant led Avery with 18 points. Brook Rhodes, who dominated Avery in the first meeting between the schools, led WHS with 15 points; Hannah Shipp had nine; Alford finished with eight points, all of those in the first half. Tori Wright left the game in the third quarter with a leg injury. She had an ice pack on her left leg when she returned to the Watauga bench. Her playing status for next week is up in the air right now.

“Avery just wanted it more tonight,” Anderson said. “Brook struggled, but you have to keep in mind, she’s only a sophomore playing at the varsity level. Plus, this is only our second game of the year. It’s Avery’s fifth game. The only way you’re going to get better is by playing more games.

“It’s still early in the season. I have a lot of confidence in these girls.”

1 2 3 4 T

WHS 18 15 8 8 - 49

AVERY 7 16 18 17 - 58

WHS: MARGOLIS 3, CHURCH 2, SHIPP 9, WRIGHT 2, EGGERS 2, ALFORD 8, HARRELSON

8, RHODES 15, WILSON 3.

AVERY: CLARK 6, DELLINGER 3, BURELSON 7, SMITH 2, ESTEP 3, BENTLEY 15, TENNANT 18, EUDY 4.

Men’s game: WHS 100, Avery 93

The Watauga High men’s basketball team cracked the century mark for the first time in three years Friday night at the Octagon in Newland.

The end result, the Pioneers outscored Avery 100-93. The Pioneers (2-0) last scored a 100 points in a game during the 2007-08 season against A.C. Reynolds at the old Lentz-Eggers Gym.

The Pioneers led throughout on Friday night. They built a 21-point lead in the first half, and led Avery 47-28 at the intermission. But Avery slowed things down in the second half and began chipping away at the lead.

Å furious rally, sparked by senior Dustin Clark, who was held to just four points in the first half, cut the lead to five midway through the third quarter at 55-50. But senior point guard Casey Quinn scored seven consecutive points, including a huge three pointer from the far corner to keep the Vikings (1-3) at bay.

“Casey can score,” said fellow senior Damian Edwards. “He can make the big shots if we need it. That run he put together by himself really settled us down.”

That run gave WHS a 67-58 lead, and the Pioneers stretched it out to13 points after three. But the Pioneers couldn’t put the Vikings away. Every time it looked like they were on the verge of breaking the game open, Avery found away to work its way back into contention.

“This place (the Octagon) has always been a tough place to play,” said WHS coach Rob Sanders, who is 14-0 lifetime against the Vikings. “But our guys kept their composure and weathered the storm in the second half. We told them at halftime that this team wasn’t going to die on its home floor.

“And they made a couple of big runs at us. But it’s a veteran group, and they refused to lose.”

And the Pioneers also staved off the Vikings with two of their better players----Will Koppenhaver (who fouled out with 1:48 left in the game) and Caleb Watson----on the bench in foul trouble. WHS also won the rebounding battle 47-36.

“We’ve been playing together for a long time,” Edwards said. “We can maintain our poise in tough situations. Avery is always a tough game, especially here. But to beat them is special. It’s a great way to start our season.”

The Vikings scored 65 points in the second half. Clark finished with a game-high 26 points. The Vikings had six players score in double figures, but they also had four players foul out. Colton Blackburn finished with 11 points and 11 rebounds. The Pioneers also had six players in double figures. Edwards led the way with 25 points, Quinn finished with 17, 15 of those in the second half; and Kyle Chambers turned in a strong game off the bench with 15 points. Watson had ten

points and eight rebounds; Jake Pifer had 16.

The Pioneers have also scored 195 points in their first two games. That's an average of 97.5 points-per-game.

"Our people can score," Sanders said. "We have the ability to put up the points. Our guys wanted to score 100 points against these guys the last time they played them (on November 23), but I told them that we would have to score 100 points to beat them in our next game. And that's what happened."

The WHS men and women continue this road trip with two games next week. The Mountain Heritage game scheduled for next Tuesday has been moved back to Monday because of final exams. The Pioneers wrap up the road trip at T.C. Roberson next Friday.

Our coverage from Burnsville begins at 6 pm Tuesday night on Oldies 100.7 FM.

1 2 3 4 - T

WHS 27 21 24 29 100

AVERY 17 11 30 35 - 93

WHS: PIFER 16, WATSON 10 (8 REBOUNDS), QUINN 17, KOPPENHAVER 10, EDWARDS 25, CHAMBERS 15, HALL 4, POGOLOFF 3.

AVERY: HUGHES 10, CLARK 26, POTTER 12, VILLANUEVA 12, T. STEWART 12, B. STEWART 12, S. BLACKBURN 2, C. BLACKBURN 11 (11 REBOUNDS).