

Pioneers pull off sweep at Mountain Heritage

Written by Mike Kelly

Sunday, 12 December 2010 01:22

The Watauga High basketball teams closed out their lengthy, three-game road trip on a winning note Saturday afternoon.

In game two, the WHS men (4-0) continued their winning ways by staving off a huge comeback and defeating Mountain Heritage 79-74. Damian Edwards paced WHs with 23 points, five rebounds and three blocked shots. Will Koppenhaver backboned that effort with 16 points and six rebounds.

He also got John Cannon, the Cougars (2-2) highly-recruited senior in early foul trouble. Cannon picked up his second foul in early in the opening stanza, which landed him on the bench. The Pioneers capitalized on the opportunity and built a commanding 21-9 first-quarter lead.

"Our goal coming into this game was to get (Cannon) in foul trouble," Koppenhaver said. "Last year, when we played them, we got him in early foul trouble and it opened up the middle. It allowed us to drive to the basket."

The Pioneers, who led by as many as 21 points in the first half, led 47-27 at the halftime break. Cannon, who is being recruited by a number of schools, had one point in the first half; he finished with 11 points. He also blocked several shots.

But the Cougars finally came to life in the second half with a 22-point blitz in the third quarter. They cut into Watauga's lead and narrowed the gap to seven at 56-49. But they never got closer than five points.

"We had an extremely good first half," WHS coach Rob Sanders said. "We shot the ball extremely well and did a good job not turning the ball over. But we told them at halftime that this team would come back. They're very talented and very well coached."

But the Pioneers weathered the storm, and some serious foul trouble in the second half. Both Edwards and Koppenhaver picked up their fourth fouls, but managed to stay in the game.

"It's just a case of playing smart," Koppenhaver said. "As seniors, it's our job to set the tone for the rest of the guys."

Alex Biggerstaff of the Cougars led all scorers with 26 points; Dillon Vess came off the bench and poured in 15.

Jake Pifer had 11 points for the Pioneers; Caleb Watson and Luke Hall each had eight.

"This is a mature bunch," Sanders said. "I have a lot of confidence in them. That's why I didn't call a time out when Mountain Heritage made its run. I knew our guys would respond, and they did."

In game one, the WHS women (2-2) snapped a two-game losing streak by knocking off Mountain Heritage 49-30. An 11-point, first-half run gave WHS a 15-5 lead and the Pioneers coasted home from there.

Brooke Rhodes led the Pioneers with 17 points. Shelby Gilliam came off the bench and added eight points; Hannah Shipp had nine. Defensively, the Pioneers did an excellent job confusing the Cougars with a 1-3-1 zone, They also held the Cougars (3-2) leading scorer, Kayla Shepard scoreless.

"I am so proud of our girls," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "We really bounced back from last night. We did a great job beating a team that was playing with a lot of confidence. Our zone

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really confused them, and it resulted in some big turnovers that we converted at the other end." The Cougars, who had won three in a row, also missed 13 free throws. And the Pioneers, who had scored all of 14 points combined in the second half of their last two games, erupted for 17 third-quarter points to take a commanding 40-22 lead, which put the contest out of reach.

"Getting other people involved offensively is great for us," Anderson said. "Brooke has been a very good scorer for us all year, but we have to have some other people step up. And Shelby did just that today. She was struggling a little bit with her shot, but she knocked down a some big ones for us in this game."

Gilliam had two three-point field goals to go with her eight points. Taylor Parker led the Cougars with 17. The Pioneers return back home to play Ashe County Tuesday night, weather permitting. Our coverage begins at 6 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.

WOMEN:

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| WHS | 12 | 11 | 17 | 9 | - 49 |
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| MTN HERITAGE | 5 | 6 | 11 | 8 | - 30 |
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WHS: RHODES 17, SHIPP 9, GILLIAM 8, MARGOLIS 6, BAIRD 2, ALFORD 2, HARRELSON 3, WILSON 2.

MOUNTAIN HERITAGE: PARKER 17, CHANDLER 4, FREEMAN 5, FRYE 4.

MEN:

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| WHS | 21 | 26 | 9 | 23 | - | 79 |
| MTN HERITAGE | 9 | 18 | 22 | 25 | - | 74 |

WHS: EDWARDS 23, KOPPENHAVER 16, PIFER 11, WATSON 8, HALL 8, GREER 2, QUINN 5 (9 ASSISTS), CHAMBERS 6.

MOUNTAIN HERITAGE: BIGGERSTAFF 26, VESS 15, CANNON 11, TOMBERLIN 9, BURELSON 4, LETTERMAN 5, BUCKNER 3, BISHOP 1.