

WHS Earns Split In Taylorsville

Written by Mike Kelly

Sunday, 16 January 2011 00:55

It was a bittersweet night for the Watauga High men's and women's basketball teams on Saturday in Taylorsville.

The WHS women (7-6 overall; 2-1 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) grabbed sole possession of third place in the NW3A/4A as they knocked off Alexander Central, 67-44. And a pair of sophomores turned in stellar efforts in the win.

Brooke Rhodes finished with a game-high 19 points and 18 rebounds, and Hannah Margolis had 15 points in the win. WHS, which led 15-13 after the first quarter, gradually pulled away. The Pioneers built a ten point lead at the break, and then took complete control in the second half as they held Alexander Central (6-9; 2-3) to 21 points in the third-and-fourth quarters combined. WHS led by as many as 24 in the final stanza.

"Road games are business trips," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "And we took care of business tonight. Alexander Central is much improved, and they challenged us early, but we just methodically put this game away with our size and speed. It was a big win for us, especially because it was a (Class) 4A game."

The win now gives WHS a 1-1 record in the 4A division, Alexander Central falls to 0-2 in divisional play. Sara Kate Ferguson led the Cougars with 11 points in the loss. The Pioneers have beaten Alexander Central seven consecutive times.

In the men's game, WHS got off to a jack rabbit start, and behind the shooting touch of senior Damian Edwards, built an early nine point lead at 13-4. But Edwards cooled down, and so did the Pioneers (8-5 overall; 2-1 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference). The end result, the Cougars took control and beat WHS 78-68. A three-pointer by Jonas Watts at the horn tied the game at 15 in the first quarter. And the Cougars eventually went on a 19-4 run and built an eight-point lead early in the second quarter. The Cougars (7-8; 3-2), who led by as many 11 in the first half, led 31-21 at halftime. They extended their lead to 17 after three and led by as many as 22 in the final stanza.

Trailing 64-42 with 3:55 to play, the Pioneers went to a trapping defense and cut the lead to eight points, 70-62 with 1:18 to play. But they never got any closer. The Cougars hit their free throws down the stretch putting the contest out of reach.

"Give our guys a lot of credit," WHS coach Rob Sanders said. "This has always been a tough place to play for us over the years. But when we made that run and got within eight, I thought we might have a chance. We seen comebacks in this building before. But our guys never quit. They played hard until the end."

The loss now leaves WHS one-and-a-half games behind Hickory first place. The Red Tornadoes (12-2; 4-0) defeated St. Stephens 64-55 Saturday afternoon. The Cougars pulled into a third-place tie with the Indians. The Pioneers return home to play St. Stephens Tuesday night before they travel to Hickory on Wednesday.

The Pioneers are also 1-1 in 4A divisional play; the Cougars are 2-0.

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"But that doesn't matter," Sanders said. "If we take care of business and finish ahead of them in the overall standings, we can still get the No.1 seed among the (Class) 4A schools. There's still a lot of games left, and we have a big week coming up starting with St. Stephens Tuesday night. They've got a very good team, and we have to put this one behind us and be ready to play."

Only four players scored for WHS Saturday night. Edwards turned in a stellar effort. He poured in 32 points, six shy of his career high. Jake Pifer finished with 18 points, all of those in the second half and Caleb Watson, who fouled out with 22 seconds left, finished with 13. Will Koppenhaver was in foul trouble most of the night. He finished with five points before fouling out with 3:51 to play.

Tyler Crouch led the Cougars with 23 points; Daniel Rauscher had 13. It was Alexander Central's first win against WHS in two years.

Our coverage of WHS-St. Stephens Tuesday night begins at 6 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The WHS JV girls beat Alexander Central 38-26. Savanna Wood and Whitney Dunnigan led the Pioneers with 12 points each. The JV boys trailed 25-9 at halftime, but came charging back only to lose 52-50 to Alexander Central. Ben Howser led WHS with 15 points; Ben Margolis had 14 points; Tyler Sturgill had nine rebounds.

WOMEN:

	1	2	3	4	T
WHS	15	18	15	19	- 67
ACHS	13	10	7	14	- 44

WHS: MARGOLIS 15, CHURCH 5, BAIRD 5, SHIPP 7, WRIGHT 1, GILLIAM 6, ALFORD 6, HARRELSON 3, RHODES 19 (18 REBOUNDS).

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ACHS: RHYNE 6, RUBNER 3, SETZER 6, SHACK 5, LOOPER 2, FERGUSON 11, RITCHIE 6, HARRIS 1, COCKRELL 2, PENNELL 2.

MEN:

	1	2	3	4	T
WHS	15	6	14	33	- 68
ACHS	15	16	21	26	- 78

WHS: PIFER 18, WATSON 13, KOPPENHAVER 5, EDWARDS 32.

ACHS: JAMES 8, BIRKEDAL 10, CROUCH 23, AYER 8, RAUSCHER 13, MECIMORE 5, MOHON 5, WATTS 6.