The Watauga High basketball teams pulled off a pair of important wins on Friday night against Hibriten at Lentz-Eggers Gym.

The WHS men defeated Hibriten 82-55 behind a 30-point performance by senior Damian Edwards. It was Edwards' third 30-point performance in the last ten days. Caleb Watson hit double figures for the fifth consecutive game as he poured in 14 points; and Will Koppenhaver had 13.

The win also gives WHS (11-6 overall; 5-2 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) a season sweep against the Panthers. The Pioneers haven't swept Hibriten (3-14; 3-6) since the 1997-98 season when Marc Payne (now at Ashe County) was coaching the Pioneers. The win also moves WHS into sole possession of second place in the NW3A/4A Conference. Hickory defeated Alexander Central 66-58 Friday night in Taylorsville, snapping the Cougars (5-3 in league play) four-game winning streak. It's also the third time this year that Hickory (8-0 in league play and in first place) has beaten Alexander Central. Twice in league play, and once during the Christmas holidays at the Catawba Holiday Classic.

WHS never trailed and built a 19-point advantage in the first half. Leading 44-27 at the intermission, WHS finally broke the game open by blitzing Hibriten 23-8 in the third quarter, grabbing a commanding 32-point lead at 67-35. The lead eventually grew to 35 points with a little more than two minutes to play.

"That's why I love coaching these guys," said WHS coach Rob Sanders. "That adversity we went through (during the Christmas tournament and the loss to Hickory last week) was a valuable learning tool. Sure, it hurts to lose, it's painful, but our guys are focused in right now. They know we have to treat every game like its a playoff game. And we were ready tonight."

The Pioneers jumped out to an early 8-0 lead before Michael Burgess hit a running one-hander to put the Panthers on the board. From there, the lead grew to an 11-point lead at 13-2. It was 23-10 at the quarter break.

In the women's game, the Pioneers were without two players----Anna Church out with a mild concussion and Brooke Rhodes, their top player. But the Pioneers (9-8; 4-3) put their problems aside and defeated Hibriten 52-35. A 13-0 run to close out the game put the Panthers (5-12; 2-7) out of their misery.

Leading 39-28 with just over four minutes left in the game, the Panthers, led by Briana Wilder and Keshia corpening, came charging back and closed the gap to four at 39-35. But WHS senior Tori Wright hit a putback on a missed shot attempt, and a pair of foul shots on Watauga's next possession to give WHS an eight-point lead that ignited the run. Wright finished with seven points, all of those in the second half.

Shelby Gilliam paced WHS with 11 points. Gilliam, who has developed into quite an outside weapon for the Pioneers this season, turned in a big second half with nine points, including a pair of threes.

"Our seniors must lead us," WHS coach Klay Anderson said. " We've been blessed with four quality seniors. They've been with this program for four years, so they know what is expected of them."

Wilder and Corpening did all the scoring for Hibriten. Wilder finished with 18 points before she

fouled out with 15 seconds left; Corpening finished with 17. The Panthers haven't beaten WHS since the 1997-98 season. The win also leaves WHS in a third-place tie the Fred T. Foard (11-5; 4-3). The Tigers defeated St. Stephens 72-49 in Newton Friday night.
And WHS entertains Fred T. Foard on Saturday. The teams wiill play a return match Tuesday night in Newton. Our coverage Saturday afternoon begins at 4:30 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.
NOTES: The WHS JV girls blew a 16-9 halftime lead, but rallied to beat Hibriten, 33-32. Tori Derrick's layup with 32 seconds left proved to be the game winner. Derrick finished with eight points; Alex Seamone had ten.....The WHS JV boys blasted Hibriten 60-28 in their game. Ben Howser paced WHS with 14 points.

WOMEN:

	1	2	3	4	T	
HIBRITEN	3	10	11	11	-	35
WATAUGA	13	5	14	20	-	52

HIBRITEN: WILDER 18, CORPENING 17.

WHS: GILLIAM 11, SHIPP 8, WRIGHT 7, WILSON 6, HARRELSON 5, BAIRD 6, WOOD 3, MARGOLIS 6.

MEN:

	1	2	3	4		T
HIBRITEN	10	17	8	20	-	55
WATAUGA	23	21	23	15	-	82

HIBRITEN: ISBELL 10, DAVENPORT 6, THOMAS 7, HARSHAW 6, BURGESS 13, PEARSON 9, DAVIS 4.

WHS: EDWARDS 30, WATSON 14, KOPPENHAVER 13, PIFER 8, GREER 1, QUINN 2, PROFIT 3, CHAMBERS 3, HALL 8.

NW3A/4A SCOREBOARD:

WOMEN:

WHS 52, HIBRITEN 35
HICKORY 67, ALEXANDER CENTRAL 54
FRED T. FOARD 72, ST. STEPHENS 49
SOUTH CALDWELL--BYE

MEN:

WHS 82, HIBRITEN 55
HICKORY 66, ALEXANDER CENTRAL 58
ST. STEPHENS 85, FRED T. FOARD 33
SOUTH CALDWELL--BYE