Written by Mike Kelly
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The Watauga High men's basketball team continued its winning ways by blowing out Fred T. Foard 73-50 on Saturday at Lentz-Eggers Gym

The win allows WHS (12-6 overall; 6-2 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) to maintain its grip on second place in the NW3A/4A Conference. WHS owns a one-game lead on Alexander Central and St. Stephens for the No.2 seed and the Cougars travel to Boone February 4. The Pioneers also handed Fred T. Foard (2-14; 0-8) its 19th consecutive loss in league play dating back to last year.

"This was a big win for us," said WHS coach Rob Sanders. "We did a good job getting back on track this week against three teams we should have beaten. But we were challenged. I thought Foard did a good job attacking us in the first half. But our guys settled down, and made some big shots in the second half."

WHS led from the start and built an 18-6 lead in the first quarter. But the Tigers kept pecking away and only trailed by nine at halftime.

"They've got some quick guards, and they gave us some problems in the first half," Sanders said. "But I thought we did a great job on the boards in the second half and that allowed us to pull away. We got a lot of good looks, and we got a lot of second-chance points."

Jake Pifer paced WHS with 22 points; Caleb Watson had 17 and Will Koppenhaver finished with ten points and five assists.

"Will is such an unselfish player," Sanders said. "He's always looking to find the open man. And as a team, we did a great job locating the open man tonight, especially in the second half. That allowed us to pull away."

As they did Friday night, the Pioneers broke the game open by outscoring the Tigers 25-10 in the third quarter, giving the Pioneers a commanding 58-34 lead. The Pioneers eventually built a 27-point advantage in the final stanza.

Justin Wike paced Fred T. Foard with 14 points before he fouled out with 12 seconds left in the game. Logan Setzer had 11. The Pioneers are 2-0 lifetime against the Tigers. They travel to Newton, NC to play the Tigers Tuesday night.

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FRED T. FOARD	14	10	10	16	-	50
WATAUGA	20	13	25	15	-	73

FTF: FLINCHUM 7, SMITH 8, WINN 2, SETZER 11, WIKE 14, BRADSHAW 2, HEFNER 6.

WHS: PIFER 22, HODGES 2, WATSON 17, QUINN 7, POOLIS 2, PROFITT 2, KOPPENHAVER 10, EDWARDS 8, HALL 2, POGOLOFF 1.

Tigers rallied by WHS Women

It was a great game with a playoff atmosphere.
The Watauga High women's basketball team fell into fourth place in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference on Saturday afternoon as they dropped a 62-51 decision to Fred T. Foard at Lentz-Eggers Gym. The Tigers (12-5 overall; 5-3 NW3A/4A), who began the day in a third place tie with the Pioneers (9-9; 4-4). put together a 13-3 run midway through the fourth quarter, wiping out a five-point deficit to win the game.
Brooke Robinson and Jessica Beaver did the majority of the damage for Fred T. Foard. Those two scored 18 points each. Robinson scored 15 of her points in the second half; Beaver had four three pointers.
"They just made more shots than we did at crunch time," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "Their inside game really hurt us. They got 16 offensive rebounds, and nine of those turned into points. And that was the difference in the game."
The game see-sawed back-and-forth with neither team leading by more than six points before the Tigers eventually pulled away down the stretch. The Pioneers led 13-12 after one, and the Tigers grabbed a two-point lead at the halftime break on a three-pointer by Drew Worrells as time ran out. And the Tigers carried that momentum into the third quarter as they built a 37-31 lead on a pair of free throws by Robinson.
But Hannah Margolis, who led WHS with 13 points (ten of those in the first half), ignited a 13-2 run and the Pioneers led 42-39 going into the final stanza. A bucket by Hannah Shipp gave WHS a five-point advantage before the Tigers rallied to win the game.
"I really thought that run at the end of the third quarter was enough for us to win the game," Anderson said. "But they kept chipping away and gave us some problems with their pressure. We made some mistakes at crunch time and those mistakes aided their comeback."
Chelsea Turner. who was scoreless until the fourth quarter, finally came to life and finished with eight points. She hit two big three-point shots down the stretch to ice the game away for Fred T. Foard.
Shipp finished with eight points for the Pioneers before she fouled out with 18 seconds to play. Gabby Wilson finished with eight points; Abby Harrelson and Tori Wright had six points each.
The loss drops WHS into fourth place, one game behind the Tigers. And these two teams hook up Tuesday night in Newton, NC for an all-important game.
"There's a lot riding on that game," said Anderson. "We need a win in the worst way. Beating them Tuesday night will even us up and we can control our destiny down the stretch. But if we lose, then that puts us two games behind them with four games left. We need a huge effort from our girls."
Saturday's win was also Fred T. Foard's first win against WHS in three tries. Our coverage of WHS basketball Tuesday night begins at 6 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.

 NOTES: The WHS JV girls defeated Fred T. Foard 35-17 on Saturday. Tori Derrick led the JV team with 12 points; Kaelin McNeil had 11.....the JV boys defeated Fred T. Foard 44-37. Dwayne Mackey had 12 points and nine rebounds; Colin Augustine 10 points, Ben Howser 8 points, Tyler Sturgill had ten rebounds.

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FRED T. FOARD	12	19	8	23	-	62
WATAUGA	13	16	13	9	-	51

FTF: WHITWORTH 3, ROBINSON 18, WORRELLS 6, TURNER 8, BEAVER 18, SKEEN 1, SMITH 8.

WHS: MARGOLIS 13, BAIRD 2, SHIPP 8, WRIGHT 6, GILLIAM 2, ALFORD 2, HARRELSON 6, WILSON 8, WOOD 4.