

WHS Women Finish Strong

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 12 February 2011 11:02

The Watauga High women's basketball team continues its climb up the ladder of success.

WHS posted its first winning regular-season record in 11 years (2000-01) by knocking off St. Stephens 54-37 Friday night in the final regular-season game for both teams. An 8-0 run just before halftime turned a three-point lead into a 31-20 advantage at the intermission. Hannah Margolis and Shelby Gilliam ignited the run with a pair of three pointers. Gilliam's dagger came with three seconds left in the first half.

"Those were big shots by Margolis and Shelby," WHS coach Klay Anderson said. "It took the life right out of (Indians)."

But the Indians (2-20 overall; 1-11 NW3A/4A Conference) suffering their first losing season in ten years, actually led 14-13 after one. Senior Lauren Simmons buried a three from just inside the time-line as the horn sounded to put the Indians on top. But the Pioneers (12-11; 7-5) held the Indians scoreless for the majority of the second quarter and methodically built an eight-point lead at 22-14. A pair of free-throws by Victoria Lavelle with 2:34 to go just before halftime finally put the Indians on the board. From there, they crawled with three at 23-20 before the Pioneers pulled away.

WHS extended its lead to 15 points in the third quarter; the lead ballooned to 19 in the final stanza. The win also gives WHS seven conference wins for the first time since the 1996-97 season. Ironically, the Pioneers won a sectional championship under the guidance of Tom Wright, Watauga's current Athletics Director, that season.

"To be mentioned in the same breath as Tom Wright is such a honor," Anderson said. "I have a lot of respect for coach Wright. Our program is slowly making that climb. We've come a long way in the last four years. We went from six league wins last year to seven this season. And finishing the regular season with a winning record is big.

"It reminds me so much of our football program a few years ago (in 2006 and 2007, better known as the Eric Breitenstein era). We turned the corner, started winning, and it became contagious."

Abby Harrelson paced WHS with 12 points, including three three-pointers. Brooke Rhodes had 11, Margolis finished with seven.

"Abby played a terrific game," Anderson said. "Her last couple of games were so-so, but tonight, she put it all together. She does so many great things that don't appear on the score sheet. She made some great passes tonight, she hit some big shot, and her defense was stellar."

Simmons led the Indians with 19 points. The Pioneers return home to play Hibriten in the opening-round of the NW3A/4A Conference tournament Monday night. The women play at 6:30 pm, the men's game will follow. Our coverage begins at 6 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: Hannah Shipp missed her second consecutive game with the flu.....the last time WHS won 12 games or more in a season was in 2000-01. That team was 17-9. It was also Tom Wright's final season as head coach of the Pioneers.

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	1	2	3	4	T
WATAUGA	13	18	16	7	- 54
ST. STEPHENS	14	6	12	5	- 37

WHS: MARGOLIS 7, CHURCH 4, WOOD 5, BAIRD 2, GILLIAM 5, ALFORD 4, HARRELSON 12, RHODES 11, WILSON 4.

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STS: LAVELLE 3, SIGMON 4, SIMMONS 19, MENARD 2, MATHIS 1, BIBEY 3, V. McMAHAN 3, THORNBERG 2.