It's that time of year again.

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association's version of March Madness has narrowed itself down to regional play following Friday night's sectionals finals. And the region has three teams still standing in the field.

Hickory High, which dominated the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference during the regular-season, coninued its domination in post-season play. Both the Hickory men and women advanced to regional play Friday night.

The Hickory men (25-3) blew out Lawndale Burns in the Class 3A sectional finals 85-47 at Kraft Gymnasium. The Red Tornadoes erupted for 56 points in the second half breaking the game open. The Red Tornadoes only led 29-23 at halftime. Denzel Dillingham led a balanced attack with 15 points and ten rebounds. Tyler Poole added 11 points. The Red Tornadoes will now play Concord (25-3) in the Class 3A Western Regional semifinals Thursday, March 3 at Flemming Gymnasium at UNC-Greensboro. Concord advanced by blowing out Hickory Ridge 92-56 in the sectional finals.

The Hickory women (26-2) advanced to regional play with a convincing 79-52 win over R.S. Central at Kraft Gymnasium. The Red Tornadoes were in complete control, building a 40-15 advantage by halfitme. Jada Payne led the way with 24 points and seven rebounds. Hillary Sigmon had 21. Hickory now plays Parkwood (25-2) in the Class 3A Western Regional semifinals Friday, March 4 at Flemming Gymnasium at UNC-Greensboro.

The Mountain Heritage men lived up to their pre-season hype by marching their way into the Class 2A Western Regionals by defeating Starmount 85-65 Friday night in Burnsville. John Cannon led the way with 28 points; Alex Biggerstaff had 23. The Cougars (22-6), the No.1 seed from the Western Highlands 1A/2A Conference, will now play Berry Academy (26-2) out of charlotte in the semifinals Wednesday, March 2 at the Greensboro Coliseum.

The Wilkes Central women came close, but fell short by losing to Bandys 67-65 in the Class 2A sectional finals Friday night. Taylor Sigmon led four players in double figures with 16 points and nine rebounds. Katie Rider, who led Wilkes Central (25-5) with 22 points, missed a last-second shot that would have tied the game. Paige Love backed Rider with 16 points; Sarah Mastin had ten.

SECTIONAL SCOREBOARD:

WOMEN:

CLASS 3A: HICKORY 79, R.S. CENTRAL 52

CLASS 4A: MALLARD CREEK 46, SOUTH CALDWELL 32

CLASS 2A: BANDYS 67, WILKES CENTRAL 65
NEWTON-CONOVER 61, EAST BURKE 42

MEN:

CLASS 3A: HICKORY 85, LAWNDALE BURNS 47
HUNTER HUSS 98, HIBRITEN 54

CLASS 2A: MOUNTAIN HERITAGE 85, STARMOUNT 65