Written by Mike Kelly
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Watauga High senior Will Koppenhaver has made a verbal commitment to play basketball at Guilford College next season.

Guilford College is a Division III school in Greensboro, NC, and the Quakers are members of the Old Dominion Athletic Conference. Koppenhaver, a 6-5 post player, made his announcement on Sunday.

"They're very high on Will," said WHS coach Rob Sanders. "And he brings a lot to the table. He's very knowledgeable about the game, and he leaves everything on the floor. He’s meant a lot to our program the last four years."

Koppenhaver was a three-year varsity starter for the Pioneers. But many forget that Koppenhaver spent a small period of time with the varsity as a freshman back in 2007-08. He was called up from the JV team at the start of the year because the men's basketball was short on players because of the state football playoffs.

"Will has a great attitude," said WHS JV and varsity assistant coach Jerry Moretz. "He was an extension of the coaching staff on the floor. He such a student of the game."

Koppenhaver averaged 11 points-a-game this season. He also led the team in field goal (56%) and free throw (76%) percentage. And with WHS's best player, Damian Edwards, serving a three-game suspension late in the season, Koppenhaver, who was named an All-Northwestern 3A/4A Conference selection this season, literally carried the Pioneers on his back in the postseason.

He averaged more than 16-points-a-game in three playoffs games, which included 12 points in his final contest as a Pioneer against Charlotte Vance in the opening round of the Class 4A state playoffs. Koppenhaver, who ignited a run that gave his team a brief a 47-46 lead in that game, fouled out with 22 seconds left in regulation time.

Vance went on to win the game 50-47 and eliminated WHS. It was a disappointing finish, but that effort epitomized his drive and desire.

"What can I say, I just love playing this game," Koppenhaver said during an interview earlier this year. "I take a lot of pride in playing this game, and playing it the right way. And I'm real hard on myself, if I don't".

As the great Vince Lombardi once said, "Chase perfection. You will never attain it, but in the long run, you will achieve excellence." Apparently, Lombardi had Koppenhaver in mind when he made that statement.