If you haven't noticed, the Watauga High softball team has quietly put together a terrific season.

And the Pioneers aren't done yet. The Pioneers continued their march towards respectability on Tuesday night with a 4-0 win against Hickory at the Sports Complex. Freshman Michala McCune and sophomore Kim Robinson backboned the win as they combined on a one-hit shutout.

McCune who left the game in the fifth inning, coughed up an questionable infield single, struck out three and walked one. Katie Mathewson of the Red Tornadoes led off the top of fourth inning with a ground ball that went deep in the hole at between short and third that was ruled an infield single.

Otherwise, McCune was in complete control.

"I should have let her go the distance," said WHS coach Stephanie Long, who is making a strong argument for coach of the year honors in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference. "But she's had some shoulder problems, and I didn't want to push her too hard. But Michala pitched a heck of game."

And Robinson wasn't too shabby, either. She struck out six of the seven batters she faced in her two innings of relief. Robinson also fueled the offense with a solo home run in the second inning and a run-scoring single in the fifth.

The win gives WHS (6-8 overall) a 5-5 record in conference play, and since WHS began playing fast-pitch softball in 1997, the Pioneers have never had a winning season in conference play. But the Pioneers, who are playoff-bound, can achieve that by winning their last two conference games (against St. Stephens on Thursday and against South Caldwell on May 6).

"I'm aware of that," Long said. "But we aren't caught up in team records, or statistics. We're just concerned about getting better every game. I thought we played a great game against Alexander Central on Friday. We didn't make any errors, and we were in the game.

"I wasn't real pleased with our intensity level today, but we still found a way to win this game. We're still young, and we're making improvements. I have a lot of confidence in this team."

The Pioneers take on St. Stephens at home Thursday afternoon at 4:30 pm. Senior Tori Wright of the Pioneers will officially sign her national letter of intent with Peace College, a Division III school in Raleigh, NC, and a member of the USA South Conference.

WHS SOCCER:

The WHS women's soccer team dropped a 3-1 decision Tuesday night at Hickory. The Red

Tornadoes scored twice in the second half to break the game open. Jeanette Vines scored the only WHS (11-3-1 ovearll; 7-2-1 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) with 15 minutes left in the game. The loss also knocks WHS out of first place in the NW3A/4A, and into a second-place tie with the Red Tornadoes. And the Red Tornadoes own the tie breaker for the No.2 seed because they've beaten St. Stephens. The Pioneers travel to St. Stephens on Thursday night.....WHS did win the JV game as the Pioneers bested Hickory, 2-1. Katherine Welch and Marcie Mahoney scored for the Pioneers. Cole Ellis had an assist.

WHS TRACK:

The WHS track teams simply dominated the competition at the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference championships on Tuesday at Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory. The women racked up 243 points; the men had 193.83. Hibriten finished a distant second with 114.50 points in the women's championships. Hibriten finished second in the men's championships with 126.33. Sydney Cook, Kasey Jones and Darby Middlebrook paced the Pioneers. Cook won both the high jump and the pole vault; Jones won the 100-and 300-meter hurdles; Middlebrook won the 800-and 1600-meter run. Julia Roberts won the 400 and Madison Harmon won the 3200. The Pioneers also captured the 4x800 and 4x400 relays.
Jordan Pineda led the men's team by winning the shot put and discus events. Jake Pifer won the high jump, Reid Harris won the pole vault, Stephen Schmal won the 200 and Daniel Osborne won the 3200. The Pioneers also won the 4x100 and 4x100 relays. Mo Gore finished second in the 100-meter dash.
The Class 4A Wsetern Regional will be on May 7.

WHS GOLF:

The Pioneers turned in their best effort of the year in the final meet of the regular season. The Pioneers, playing on their home course at the Boone Golf Club, fired a season-best 314 and finished fourth.
Hickory paced the field with a 296 to win the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference title. Alexander Central finished second with a 302. Ben Gardner of Alexander Central and J.T. Poston of Hickory (who will attend Western Carolina next fall) paced the field as each man fired a 72. Frank Wyatt of Hickory finished one-shot back at 73. Cameron Taylor the Pioneers was three shots off the pace with a 76.
"I was real proud of Cameron, who is only a sophomore," said WHS coach Mike Northern. "That's his best round of the season. He's worked real hard on his game and it really paid off today."
Trey McNeil, Spencer Hodges and Ben Beason of the Pioneers all qualified for regionals on Tuesday afternoon. McNeil fired a 78, Hodges had an 80 and Beason finished with an 84.

Alexander Central was the only Class 4A school to qualify for regionals; Hickory and St. Stephens qualified for regionals in Class 3A.
"This finish gives our team a lot of confidence to build on for next year," Northern said. "I'm very proud of them. It's been a tough year, but I applaud their never-give-up attitudes."
The Class 4A Western Regional will be held at the Pine Island Country Club in Charlotte May 2.

WHS TENNIS:

To no one's surprise, the WHS men's tennis team chalked up another conference championship on Tuesday at the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference tournament. The Pioneers, dating back to 1997, have now won 15 consecutive conference championships.
On Tuesday, the Pioneers also produced six regional qualifiers. Patrick O'Neal defeated teammated Chris Ludwig 4-6 6-1 7-6 gor the singles championship. O'Neal defeated Graham Rubner of Alexander Central 6-0, 6-0 in the opening round; Adam Smith of South Caldwell 6-0, 6-2 in the semifinals before he upended Ludwig in the finals. Ludwig received a first-round bye; he then defeated Patrick Mangan of South Caldwell 6-7, 6-1, 6-1 in the semifinals.

Steve Lake and Michael Smith defeated Landon Taylor and Harrison Battle 6-0 6-1 for the doubles title. Following a first-round bye for both doubles teams, Lake and Smith defeated Jay Johnson and Hayden Frank of South Caldwell 6-0, 6-0 in the semifinals; Taylor and Battle defeated Caleb Edwards and Evan Gibson of South Caldwell 6-1, 6-3 in their semifinal match.

The Class 4A Western Regionals will be held May 6-7 at a site to be determined. The Pioneers wrap-up the regular-season in duals play against Lake Norman on Thursday down in Hickory. They will open the state dual team playoffs at home on May 3 against Davie County, according to WHS coach Scott Taylor.

WHS LACROSSE:

The WHS women's lacrosse team snapped a two-game losing streak by outscoring Mount Tabor Tuesday night 12-9 in their final home match of the year at the Sports Complex. Jessie Nash had five goals; Olivia Li had three tallies. The Pioneers (5-7) wrap-up the season at West Forsyth Thursday night.