

Spartans Win on Poarch's Walk-Off

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 30 April 2011 18:54

The South Caldwell Spartans defeated Draughn 2-1 Saturday afternoon in Sawmills.

The Spartans (20-2) won the game, thanks to Dylan Poarch, who belted a game-winning, walk-off home run in the bottom of the seventh inning in their regular-season finale. The Spartans, who won the East Rutherford Easter Tournament Thursday night, will begin Northwestern 3A/4A Conference tournament play this week.

The Spartans, the No.1 seed, will receive a first-round bye. They will play either Hickory or Fred T. Foard in the semi-finals Friday night at MS Deal Stadium in Granite Falls, NC. The Red Tornadoes (14-9), the No.4 seed, entertain Fred T. Foard (9-11), the No.5 seed Tuesday night. The Watauga High baseball team begins post-season play Tuesday night at home. The Pioneers (13-7), a No.3 seed, entertain St. Stephens (6-13), the No.6 seed, at Pioneer Field. The right-hander Ethan Greene (3-3) gets the starting nod. Greene has lost his last two decisions, including a 6-2 setback on Monday against Chase in the opening round of the East Rutherford Easter Tournament in Forest City, NC.

But the Pioneers rebounded with convincing wins against R.S. Central and Team Carolina to finish fifth. The Pioneers begin post-season play tied with Alexander Central for the No.2 seed, and the final automatic bid for the state playoffs.

"Pride and tradition are on the line," said WHS coach Pete Hardee, who picked up his 300th career win last Thursday. "Things haven't gone the way we would like, but we still have a chance to redeem ourselves. It's just a matter of playing together as a team, not as individuals. And I really feel we got that accomplished in the last two games at (East Rutherford) this tournament."

The Pioneers swept the season series against the Indians this year, which includes an 8-4 victory on Senior Night on April 21. Senior Josh Roberts turned in a career game with his second grand slam of the season and five RBI. That win also nailed down the No.3 seed for WHS. The Pioneers beat the Indians 4-3 in St. Stephens on March 29. WHS has won three in a row against the Indians, and St. Stephens is 0-2 lifetime against the Pioneers in Boone. The Indians haven't played since last Tuesday. They defeated Newton-Conover 12-6 in the consolation round of the Catawba Valley Easter Classic. But the Indians opened tournament play by falling to Hickory, 7-2. The Indians made seven errors in that game.

Greene will be making his second appearance against St. Stephens Tuesday night. He's 1-0 lifetime against the Indians. In five innings of work, he's given up one hit, he's walked one and he has struck out seven. Hitting-wise, Max Linville is 7-16 (.438 batting average) against the Indians with six runs scored, and two home runs. Roberts is 5-13 (.385) with a grand slam and six RBI; and Matt Proffitt is 7-17 (.412) with a home run, a double and four RBI.

Jacob Hoyle has been the Indians most productive hitter against the Pioneers. He's 9-16 (.563) with four runs scored. But he's only driven in two runs against WHS pitching. Phillip Carroll is 7-15 (.466) with three runs scored and three RBI. Pitching-wise, left-hander Colton Allison has

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been tough on the Pioneers. In two appearances, Allison, who doesn't have a decision against WHS, has given up one earned run on two hits in three innings of work (for a 2.33 earned-run-average). He's struck out four and hasn't walked anyone.

"(St. Stephens coach) Chip (Watts) gets a lot out of his kids," Hardee said. "They gave us a strong test (in their last meeting on April 21). But our guys responded with a big win. We loosened up and played well in a huge game for our team. We're swinging the bats well, and hopefully our best baseball is ahead of us.

"We're at that point of the season where it's do or die. We have to win Tuesday to survive. We're just going to work hard and see how far we can go."

Alexander Central (12-10), the No.2 seed, entertains Hibriten (7-16), the No.7 seed Tuesday night in Taylorsville. The Panthers closed out the regular season by splitting a double-header with North Iredell on Friday night. Hibriten lost the opener 11-2, but they came charging back to win the night-cap, 20-5.

Our coverage of WHS-St. Stephens begins at 6:30 pm Tuesday night on Oldies 100.7 FM.

□ **NOTES:** The top seeds will host the first round of tournament games beginning on Tuesday. Wednesday and Thursday are possible rain dates. The semi-finals and finals will be played at MS Deal Stadium in Granite Falls, NC (Friday, May 6 and Saturday, May 7). Monday, May 9 is a possible rain date. The state playoffs selections will be announced on Tuesday, May 10; the state playoffs begins Friday, May 13.....If the Pioneers get the No.2 seed, they would host the No.3 seed from the MEGA 7 Conference in the opening round of the state playoffs. But if they don't get the No.2 seed, the Pioneers could possibly receive a wildcard bid. And if they are selected, they would open the playoffs on the road, most likely against a No.1 seed.

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