Written by Mike Kelly
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The Ashe County Huskies have released their schedule for the 2011 season.

The Huskies, who began the year with five consecutive losses, are led by coach Bill Strong now entering his eighth year at the helm. The Huskies, despite that slow start, rallied to win four of their last six games and made the state playoffs for the eighth consecutive time.
Unfortunately, the Huskies (4-8 overall, but 4-4 in the Mountain Valley Conference) endured their first losing season since the 2003 season. Strong is 42-41 during his tenure at Ashe County. His best seasons came between 2005-2007, when the Huskies were 24-13 and won two consecutive MVC 1A/2A titles (2006-07).
The Huskies host WHS on Friday, August 26. The Pioneers, who missed the state playoffs for the first time four years last fall, have won eight straight against the Huskies. Ashe County's last win came in 2001 by a 14-7 score in West Jefferson.

ASHE COUNTY 2011 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE:

AUGUST 19 WEST CALDWELL
AUGUST 26 WATAUGA
SEPTEMBER 2 @ NORTH SURRY
SEPTEMBER 9 @ ELKIN*
SEPTEMBER 16 STARMOUNT*
SEPTEMBER 23 @ WEST WILKES *
SEPTEMBER 30 NORTH WILKES* (HOMECOMING)
OCTOBER 7 @ ALLEGHANY *
OCTOBER 14 WILKES CENTRAL*
OCTOBER 21 @ FORBUSH *
OCTOBER 28 EAST WILKES* (SENIOR NIGHT)

*** - DENOTES MOUNTAIN VALLEY CONFERENCE GAMES**

CANNON, PAYNE, SIGMON TO PLAY IN EAST-WEST GAME

Seniors John Cannon of Mountain Heritage High, Jada Payne and Hillary Sigmon of Hickory have been selected to play in the East-West Senior All-Star Basketball games at the Greensboro Coliseum July 18.

Payne was Player of the Year in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference last season, and she was also named the Most Valuable Player in the NW3A/4A tournament. She single-handedly defeated Watauga in the championship game.

Payne, who got into foul trouble in the first half, errupted for 22 of her 28 points in the third quarter as the Red Tornadoes beat the Pioneers 86-53 at Kraft Gymnasium. Payne, who will attend LaSalle University this fall (in the Atlantic 10 Conference) and Sigmon, who will attend Charlotte (also a member of the A-10) teamed up to lead Hickory to the Class 3A state finals, when the Red Tornadoes lost to South Central in overtime.

Cannon, a two-time player of the year in the Western Highlands 1A/2A Conference, led Mountain Heritage to the Class 2A Western Regional Finals. Unfortunately, the Cougars were bested by East Rutherford, which went on to win the Class 2A title.

Cannon, who was being recruited by Appalachian State University, has recently committed to play at the University of Georgia. Northwestern and a possible walk-on spot from North Carolina were among his other choices. Payne and Cannon were also selected to the NCPreps.com and the North Carolina-Associated Press All-State teams.