Written by Mike Kelly
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The Watauga High men's and women's cross country team officially began their respective seasons Saturday in Boone at the Annual Pioneers Clash of the Classes. The WHS men and women both finished first and easily outdistanced the

field. Scoring was kept similar to a track meet with the highest score prevailing (normally, the lowest score in cross country wins the meet). The WHS women bested the field with 64 points and finished a whopping 40 points ahead of the field. Lincoln Charter finished a distant second with 24 points; the men bested the field with 53 points. McDowell was 32 points behind with 21 points.

In the women's senior race, WHS had five runners in the top ten, including the top three finishers. Darby Middlebrook paced the field in 11 minutes, seven point-72 seconds. Madison Harmon finished second in 12:12.05; Doria Kosmala was third in 12:29.55. Riley Dobbins finished sixth and Jordan Stokes was tenth. Lynde Wangler won the junior race in 12:46.85; Celia Jackson was third (13:04.47). WHS had three runners in the top ten. Kathleen Mansure finished second in the sophomore race in 12:19.10; Shelby Hickernell was third (13:00.54). WHS had four finishers in the top ten. The freshmen had two top-ten finishers---Jesse Wangler was fifth in 14:00.64 and Carson Middlebrook was seventh in 14:20.88.

In the men's race, WHS had four runners in the top ten in the senior race. Josh Anderson finished second in 10:18.49; Peter Vandenberg, an all-state finisher in cross country last fall who suffered a foot injury during the track season, finished third in 10:37.12. The juniors had three top-ten finishers in their race. John Vollmer finished third in 11:30.31; the sophomores had two top-ten finishers. Michael Holland paced the field as he won the race in 10:24.49; Drew Boyette was fourth (10:54.75). The freshmen had three top-ten finishers. Joe Wiswell finished second in 11:19.08; Matthew Hellenbrand finished third in 11:58.82.

WHS will compete in the Western North Carolina Cross Country Carnival Saturday at Jackson Park in Hendersonville, N.C. T.C. Roberson will be the host school.