Written by Mike Kelly
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Well, the Watauga High men's soccer team nailed down its first trip to regionals since 1999 with a 2-0 win against Cornelius-Hough on the road Wednesday night. WHS (18-3-3) will now play Asheville-

Roberson (23-2) in the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Class 4A Western Regional semifinals at Jack Groce Stadium Saturday at 6 p.m.

The Rams, the No.1 seed from the Mountain Athletic 3A/4A Conference and ranked No.6 in the state in Class 4A in the North Carolina Soccer Coaches Association Poll, defeated No.16 North Mecklenburg 4-2 in overtime Wednesday night.

"And Roberson will be the second toughest team we've seen this year (Hickory being the other)," said WHS coach Woody McKay. "It's another game, and another chance to keep playing. Our defense was superb tonight. We marked well, and Jake (Chasteen) was super in the goal. It was a big win on the road, especially winning in Charlotte."

The Pioneers, who are ranked No.10 in the NCSCA Poll, got another huge boost from senior Alex Parsons Wednesday night against the Huskies. Parsons, who has been a scoring machine for the Pioneers this season, had a hand in both of WHS' goals.

He picked up an assist on Logan Raichle's tally at the 20-minute mark of the first half. Raichle took the feed near the net and chipped it over the goalkeeper for a 1-0 lead. Then Parsons added an insurance goal as he drilled a direct kick at the 59-minute mark of the second half.

"And both were beautiful goals," McKay. "But that's the way this team has played all year. They just keep finding ways to get the job done. I am so proud of this team. We're playing very well defensively, and we're playing with a lot of confidence."

The winner of Saturday's semifinal matchup with play either No.7 South Mecklenburg (the No.2 seed from the Southwestern Conference) or No.4 Myers Park (No.1 seed from the Southwestern Conference) in the regional finals next Wednesday, November 14.

"Let's keep our focus on Saturday for now," McKay said. "We're playing a pretty good opponent in T.C. Roberson Saturday night."

In Class 3A, No.2 Hickory (25-1) advanced to the Western Regional semifinals with a 3-2 win against No.4 Ashbrook Wednesday night; the Red Tornadoes will play No.13 Enka Saturday. Enka (18-6-1) defeated Freedom, 2-1.

In Class 2A, former WHS coach Doug Kidd has Swansboro, the No.3 seed from the East Central Conference, in the Eastern Regional semifinals after the Pirates, ranked No.14 in the NCSCA Pol1, blew a 4-2 lead in the second overtime period, but rallied for a 5-4 sudden-death win over Durham School of the Arts.

"It's been a crazy year for sure," said Kidd, who dismissed two players, including his best player, from the team two weeks ago. "But we've put a run together. We'll see what happens Saturday. One thing for sure, we nearly gave it away tonight."

The Pirates (14-8-2) take on No.7 Jordan Matthews (18-4-1), the No.1 seed from the Mid-State Conference, Saturday night on the road.