

Pioneers Ousted By Rams In State Quarters

Written by Mike Kelly

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The Watauga High men's soccer team saw its magical run come to an end Saturday night. The Pioneers (18-4-3), making their first regional appearance since 1999, dropped a 1-0 decision to T.C. Roberson (24-2) in the North Carolina High

School Athletic Association Class 4A Western Regional semifinals at Jack Groce Stadium. The Rams, ranked No.6 in the state in the Class 4A North Carolina Soccer Coaches Association Poll, advance to the western finals next Tuesday or Wednesday night. TCR will play No.4 Myers Park (20-2), which advanced to the regional finals with a 4-0 win over South Mecklenburg Saturday night.

"It was a lot of fun," WHS coach Woody McKay. "(T.C. Roberson) outplayed us for the first 20 minutes of the first half, but our guys adjusted. I really thought we evened things up in the last 20 minutes of the first half, and we had some great chances in the second half. But we just couldn't find the net."

Logan Raichle sent a shot just wide midway through the second half, and the Pioneers had some good looks, but they couldn't capitalize. The Rams, riding an eight-game winning streak, scored the game's only goal at the 45 minute mark of the second half. Austin Stamey, who moved back to the Asheville area from Charlotte where he was playing academy soccer, pushed one in snapping the scoreless tie.

"He's an excellent player, and he's given them quite a boost this season," McKay said. "But we kept the game close. We had a great crowd tonight, and we gave it our best shot. It just wasn't our night. But I'm proud of the kids. We had a great season. Sure, it's disappointing we lost. And believe me, we gave it our best shot to win the game, but we came up short. But we still had a great season."

In Class 3A, Hickory advanced to the western finals with a 3-2 win over Enka. The No.2 Red Tornadoes will play Charlotte Catholic in the championship game next week. Charlotte Catholic advanced by knocking off Weddington 3-1 in the western semifinals Saturday night.

And in Class 2A, Jordan Matthews defeated Swansboro 1-0 in overtime in the eastern semifinals. The Pirates are led by former WHS coach Doug Kidd.