Watauga High wrestling coach Todd Allan is a well traveled man. From his days as a student-athlete in Ohio, to his coaching stints in Montana, Colorado (just to name a few of his stops), and now in North Carolina, Allan

has always found a way to succeed. And now in his second year with the Pioneers, Allan hopes to put a struggling program back on its feet.

And the Pioneers got off to a nice start Wednesday night in their season opener. WHS, which finished 11th in a 16-team field, had two champions and four place finishers at the Old Appalachian Wrestling Tournament at Lentz-Eggers Gym.

"And we only had nine kids in the lineup," Allan said. "so, I'm pleased with the results. The kids worked hard and gave a good effort tonight. And that's what I want every time we step on the mat. Give me your best effort. Everything else will take care of itself."

Gus Coffey and Demetre Kostis, who both qualified for state last season, took first place in their respective weight classes. Coffey won the title at 126. He went 4-0 with two pinfalls. Coffey defeated Kade Guffey of Robbinsville 9-8 in the finals.

Kostis won the title at 138. He went 4-0 with a pinfall; Kostis defeated Ben Huges of Fred T. Foard 6-5 in the finals. Teamwise, Fred T. Foard won the tournament.

"They had a lot of guys place today," Allan said. "They have a solid squad, and we got a look at a conference foe and what to expect this season. But it's a long journey. It's going to take time for our program to get turned around. But I'm confident we'll do it."

Mark Townsend went 3-2 with a pinfall and finished fourth at 113 pounds; Jeremy Critcher was 2-2 with a pair of pinfalls and finished fourth at 195.

The Pioneers travel to West Caldwell next Wednesday for a tri-meet with Freedom and the Warriors.