Written by Mike Kelly
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The Watauga High men's and women's swimming teams opened the regular season with a dominant performance in Hickory. The WHS women defeated Hibriten 64-28, Fred T. Foard 51-43, and

Alexander Central 74-16. The Pioneers won six events. Anne Taylor led the way winning two events, the 50-free style in 26.78 seconds, and the 100-free style in 58.73. Darby Middlebrook won the 200-free style in 2:12.10; Carson Middlebrook won the 100 breast stroke in 1:16.78; and the Pioneers also captured the 200-medley relay (1:56.01) and the 400-free style relay (4:16.64).

For the men, WHs defeated Hibriten 69-22, Fred T. Foard 52-42, and Alexander Central 67-22. The Pioneers won six events. Marcus Funston won the 50-free style (24.33), Forrest Brown won the 100-free style (55.26), Brandon Michelsen won the 500-free style (6:09.04), Joel Brown won the 100-breast stroke (1:09.89), and the Pioneers also won the 200-free style (1:43.41) and 400-free style relays (3:54.03).

"Considering this was the first meet of the season, I was pleased with the performance of the teams," said WHS coach David Gragg. "Fred T. Foard has some strong year round swimmers on both sides, and their top male swimmer, Jake Pierce, is the reigning conference Swimmer of the Year. We have been limited in practice time due to weather, construction at the pool, and holidays, so I was just looking to get kids in events to know where we were. Julianna Silver, Carson Middlebrook, and Maddy Allain had great debut performances during their freshman campaigns. They have all swam on the local club team, so I knew they were talented. After each of their swims, I kept thinking 'this helps, and this helps even more'. Anne Taylor and Doria Kosmala had strong swims as we have come to expect as coaches. Darby Middlebrook competed in the distance events to get back into shape and help the team score points. Sidney Wiswell, Eliza Enterline, Cheyenne Hayler, Sophia Pricso, and Dakota Wilson are just a few of the other ladies that will we will count on to score in meets as we progress during the season."

The Pioneers will travel to Valdese for a quad-meet with Maiden, East Burke, and Draughn on Wednesday, December 5.