

## Pioneers Hold Off Eagles

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 28 November 2012 10:02

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It was Jay Harrill's moment to shine. And the Watauga High junior stepped up in a big way as he buried a three pointer with 5:24 left in the game that gave

WHS a 40-37 lead and ignited an 11-4 run. The end result, the Pioneers (2-0) defeated Wilkes Central 55-47 at Lentz-Eggers Gym in a non-conference game Tuesday night. The Eagles (1-1) haven't won in Boone since 1999.

"Jay hit a big shot for us," said WHS coach Rob Sanders. "When he gets some space to work with, he can be really effective. We gave him some space to work with on that shot. He got an open look and he buried it."

That shot also made amends for a foul he committed with no time remaining on the clock to end the third quarter. Harrill fouled Will Cornette of the Eagles on a three-point attempt at the horn. Cornette (his dad, Richie Cornette, played and graduated from Alleghany High in 1982 and he was Athletics Director and men's basketball coach East Wilkes) buried three free throws and cut WHS' lead at five, at 37-32.

The Eagles, who trailed by 12, put together a 12-2 run and tied the game at 37 all on a three by Austiin Staley with 6:26 left in the fourth quarter. But Harrill hit the biggest shot of the game moments later.

"Jay knew he made a mistake," Sanders said. "The first rule in basketball is never foul a jump shooter. But Jay didn't dwell on it. He bounced back by making that big shot and it gave us a huge lift."

The Pioneers extended their advantage to 48-41 and the Eagles never got any closer than five points the rest of the way. WHS, despite some shakey free throw shooting in the fourth quarter (they were 7-12 at the line), kept the Eagles at bay.

"It's frustrating," Sanders said. "We work on free throws every day in practice. But then you look at the score book and you shoot 55 percent. One of our team goals was to shoot 75 to 80 percent this season. Free throws can win close ball games like this. And the fourth quarter is key.

"We're playing a team that shoots the three-ball well. But if we make our free throws, it staves off any comeback attempts. But we allowed them to stay in the game. We just made enough free throws down the stretch to pull this one out."

The Pioneers were 19-29 at the charity stripe. The game had its anxious moments, but WHS never trailed again after it bridged together a 13-1 run that began late in the first half and stretched into the third quarter.

The Pioneers also built their biggest lead of the game at 35-23 with a little more than four minutes left in the third quarter. But the Eagles came charging back and made close at the end. "We really challenged these guys at halftime," Sanders said. "We want to get rid of this coming out flat in the third quarter like we've done in the past. We wanted them to build a double-digit lead, but we gave it right back in the final minute of the period with silly decisions on offense and breakdowns on the defensive end."

Harrill finished with five points; Cameron Baker led the Pioneers with a game-high 14 points, six rebounds and three steals. DeWayne Mackey had nine points and five assists. Cornette led Wilkes Central with ten points; Calvin Shoemaker had nine.

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"This is a quality win for us," Sanders said. "We told these guys that they were going to be seriously tested tonight. And if you can't play against an athletic team as good as Wilkes Central, how do you think you're going to do against a team like Hickory in our (Northwestern 3A/4A) conference. This was a stepping stone for our guys. We showed we can play and hold our own against good athletic teams."

**WHS 55, WILKES CENTRAL 47**

### SCORE BY PERIODS 1 2 3 4 TOTAL

WILKES CENTRAL 10 12 10 15 - 47

WATAUGA 9 15 13 18 - 55

WILKES CENTRAL: OSBORNE 4, CORNETTE 10, SHOEMAKER 9, BAILEY 7, WILLIAMS 3, STALEY 6, HOWELL 8.

THREE PIONTERS: STALEY 2, CORNETTE, BAILEY

WHS: HARRILL 5, STEURY 2, STURGILL 1, GAILES 6, MARGOLIS 3, KOPPENHAVER 5 (FIVE REBOUNDS, THREE STEALS), BAKER 14 (SIX REBOUNDS, THREE STEALS), HOWSER 6, MACKEY 9 (FIVE ASSISTS), LAMBERT 4.

THREE POINTERS: HARRILL, GAILES.

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## WHS Women Blast Eagles

The issue was never really in doubt. WHS led 4-2 early in the game, but thanks to Danielle Welsh and Kaelin McNeill, the Watauga High women's basketball team pulled way in the second quarter and trounced Wilkes Central 47-22 at Lentz-Eggers Gym. The win also snapped a three-game losing streak against the Eagles.

McNeill finished with a game-high 14 points, including 12 in the first half as the Pioneers (2-0), who led 8-2, outscored the Eagles 16-5 in the second stanza and opened up a commanding 24-7 halftime lead.

"I really felt the key to this game was our defense," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "We forced a lot of turnovers and it led to a number of transition baskets. And we also took advantage of our size. Danielle got off to a great start, but then she picked up her second foul and we sat her for the rest of the first half. But Kaelyn really picked her up. And last year at this time, she missed lay up after lay up, but she's worked hard to finish her shot. She's so long and so tall and she's always getting her hands on the basketball around the net."

The Pioneers kept pouring it on in the second half and led by as many as 35 points in the fourth quarter. And the Pioneers did most of the damage without their two top players---Hannah Margolis and Savanna Wood. Margolis, who didn't score in the first half, finished with four points; Wood had eight.

"But those girls got so many tips and deflections tonight," Anderson said. "They really ignited our defense. But we needed a lot of help from a lot of people, and we got it. That's what I really like about this team. We're not leaving it up to one person. We're getting a lot of people to chip in."

Laken Blackburn led the Eagles with 11 points. But the Eagles (1-2), who were 30-2 and reached the Class 2A state finals last season, struggled mightily from the floor. They only made two field goals in the entire first half, and six for the game. Blackburn had three of those.

"It's a nice win," Anderson said. "But we still have a lot of work to do. Most of these girls know what I'm like. I'm pretty intense, and it's my job to teach perfection. We're never going to play the perfect game, but for three and a half quarters tonight, we played basketball like the coaching staff and I teach it. But we got pretty sloppy in that final period."

The WHS men and women close out their three-game home stand Friday night against Ashe County. Coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

**NOTES:** Jenna Woods of the Pioneers missed Tuesday night's game with a leg injury. She was injured during the second quarter of last Monday's season opener against Avery. According to head coach Klay Anderson, Wood is out indefinitely.....Point guard Haleigh Wallace missed her second consecutive game with a stress fracture in her right leg....For the WHS men, Collin Augustine (broken hand) and Trevor Eggers (recovering from knee surgery) did not play.....The JV boys (4-0) won their 29th consecutive game by knocking off Wilkes Central 46-22. Michael

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Ebaugh led the way with 11 points; Caleb Bryson had nine points; Utah Jones had four rebounds and three steals; Bryson had five assists and two blocked shots.....The JV girls (2-2) lost to Wilkes Central 33-25. Ryan Loflin had eight points; Brooklin Carroll had seven and Mary Seramur had four points.

**WHS 47, WILKES CENTRAL 22**

### SCORE BY PERIODS 1 2 3 4 TOTAL

WILKES CENTRAL      2   5   3   12 -   22

WATAUGA              8   16   11   12 -   47

WILKES CENTRAL: FOSTER 2, MASTIN 2, GRAHAM 2, WILLIAMS 1, McCUMBER 4, BLACKBURN 11.

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THREE POINTERS: NONE

WHS: WOOD 8, DERRICK 6, MARGOLIS 4, HARRIS 6, McNEILL 14, MAKAROVA 2, WILSON 1, WELSH 6.

THREE POINTERS: NONE

## **NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE**

## **TUESDAY'S GAMES**

## **WOMEN:**

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WATAUGA 47, WILKES CENTRAL 22

NEWTON CONOVER 64, ST. STEPHENS 58

HICKORY 60, NORTH SURRY 45

WEST CALDWELL 53, SOUTH CALDWELL 33

### **MEN:**

ST. STEPHENS 67, NEWTON-CONOVER 63

HICKORY 82, NORTH SURRY 45

WEST CALDWELL 56, SOUTH CALDWELL 52

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### MONDAY'S GAMES

#### WOMEN:

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 80. WEST IREDELL 49

#### MEN:

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 55, WEST IREDELL 40