Kim Robinson made history on Friday. She became the first Watuaga High softball player to sign with a nationally-ranked team. Robinson, arguably the best softball player in school history,

made it official by signing her National Letter of Intent with Lenor-Rhyne University, a Divison II school in Hickory, N.C., and a member of the South Atlantic Conference.

The Bears are three-time regular-season and tournament champions, and they were ranked 20th in the country last season. For Robinson, it's a honor to be recognized by such a prestigious program.

"I'm going to play softball for a nationally ranked team, and the school also fits my educational goals," Robinson said. "I'm a marketing major, and they have a strong business school. They have a great tradition in softball, so I'm going to have to earn my position. But I wouldn't want it any other way."

And earning her way has been the norm for Robinson. Since she started playing softball in the third grade, Robinson has developed into a power-hitter and a quality pitcher. And the Bears, who got a glipse of Robinson at a couple of their camps, were extremely impressed with what they saw.

"Kimberly (Robinson) will be a good asset to our program on and off the field," said L-R coach Shena Hollar. "She is an outstanding student-athlete who will add to our pitching staff and also plays first base. Her biggest attribute will be the offensive power she brings."

"It's the perfect fit for Kim," WHS coach Stephanie Long-Kostis. "We (Robinson, Long-Kostis and her travel coach) sat down and looked at all of her options. And Lenior-Rhyne was the answer. The question for her was, 'do you want to get an educaton and play softball, or do you want to play softball and concerntrate on a major later on.' For Kim, her education came first.

"And getting the chance to play for a great program like Lenior-Rhyne is huge. I've always respected their program. They're a tough group, and a solid national program. And with the this class (of 2014) their bringing in, they might have a strong chance at winning a national championship."

The Bears were 48-13 last year, and 14-4 in the SAC. And Robinson, a two-time Northwestern 3A/4A All-Conference performer and the Pioneers' Most Valuable Player last season, hopes to crack the lineup as a pitcher and a first baseman.

"I'm confident about my hitting," Robinson said. "But I have to do a better job of locating my pitches at the college level. I must do a better job of out-thinking the hitters and moving the ball around. And I really like the coach. She doesn't yell when something goes wrong. She talks to you, and I like her laid back style."

"And she will be a very good college player, believe me," said Long-Kostis. "You can't blow the ball by people in college. You have to tease the hitters, and make them chase your pitches. Kim is a great player right now, and she can hit with power. She is only going to get stronger and better at the college level."

But there's still unfinished business at WHS for Robinson and her current teammates. The Pioneers, who made an early exit from the state playoffs last spring (they lost to East Gaston in the opening round), the goal this season is to win a conference championship.

"And I believe it's a realistic goal," Robinson said. "We have a lot of good players coming back.

And we really believe in ourselves. I really feel this could be our year."
And with Alexander Central losing its ace, Chelsea Wilkinson, to graduation (she is currently a freshman at the University of Georgia), Robinson, Long-Kostis and the rest of the Pioneers feel the conference race is wide open.
"Fred T. Foard returns its best pitcher (Lexi Shubert, who has signed with USC-Upstate), but they lost some of their key players to graduation," Long-Kostis said. "It should be a wide-open race, and our girls really believe they can do it. I've said it all along, it takes three years to build a program, and this is our third year. We have four solid seniors coming back, we have a great leadership from our veteran players. I'm expecting big things from this group."
And for Robinson, it would be a fitting way to close out her high school career, especially beating out Alexander Central for the league title.
"I hit two home runs off them, and one of them off Chelsea," Robinson said. "It was special. And it would be nice to go out with a conference championship my senior year."
Robinson is one of four players signed by the Bears. L-R also signed Sarah Kenley from Charlotte, Dakota Keller from Shelby-Crest High School, and Sydney Landreth from Disputanta, Va.
"This is one of the best recruiting classes that I have signed in my coaching career," said Hollar. "I look for this class to come in and quickly make an impact on our successful program. I look forward to seeing what this class can do in four years."