The Watauga High women's basketball team has never had much success against McDowell over the years. But then again, a lot of teams haven't had

much success against the Titans, either. The Pioneers (3-1), off to their best start in 14 years, were entertaining thoughts of possibly beating McDowell on its home floor (something the Pioneers have never done). And who can blame them. The Pioneers have only beaten McDowell once in school history (1996-97).

Unfortunately, those ambitions were derailed Tuesday night in Marion as the Titans defeated WHS 59-36 in a non-conference game. Oh, the Pioneers got off to a good start. Danielle Welsh scored on WHS' first possession of the game, and after they fell behind 15-4, the Pioneers came charging back and got within three at 17-14 late in the first quarter. The Pioneers' relentless attitude carried over into the second period.

A three pointer by Claire Harris made it 23-22 McDowell. But from that point on, McDowell took control. The Titans (2-1) went on a 12-0 run and built a 13-point lead. The Pioneers never got any closer than eight points the rest of the way.

"Consistency is a big word for us this season," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "I was proud the way we came back after they shot the lights out in the first quarter. But we didn't box out, and we made too many turnovers and that allowed them to take control."

Adding to the woes, WHS' offense went dormant in the second half, The Pioneers only scored eight points in the final 16 minutes of the game, including one point in the final stanza. Meanwhile, the Titans gradually pulled away and built a commanding 53-35 lead with 1:22 left in the third quarter.

"It's all right," Anderson said. "You're going to get knocked down sometimes. You've just got to get back up. And I'm confident my girls will do just that. I like our attitude. The girls were real disappointed after tonight's game. They're anxious to get back at it."

Harris led WHS with 12 points on four three pointers; Welsh finished with nine points; Hannah Margolis had seven points; four assists, two blocked shots and eight rebounds; Kaelin McNeill had nine boards.

Kylee Lenon paced the Titans with a game-high 18 points. Nikki Mills had 13 points and Markia Stacey had 11. The Titans also buried seven trifectas.

"They've got some girls that can shoot the lights out," Anderson said. "But we hung with them for a while. That late run they had in the second quarter put us too far behind and we couldn't make it up."

McDowell won the JV game by defeating WHS 54-18. Brooklin Carroll led WHS (3-3) with six points.

McDOWELL 59, WATAUGA 36

SCORE BY PERIODS	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**TOTAL**
WATAUGA	14	14	7	1	- 36
McDOWELL	20	16	17	6	- 59

WHS: WOOD 3, MARGOLIS 7 (4 ASSISTS, 2 BLOCKED SHOTS, 8 REBOUNDS), HARRIS 12, McNEILL 2 (9 REBOUNDS), MAKAROVA 1, WILSON 2, WELSH 7.
THREE-POINTERS - HARRIS 4, WOOD 1.

McDOWELL: NOBLITT 5, BLANTON 2, McRARY 3, MILLS 13, BRACKETT 2, STACEY 11, LENON 18, SMITH 5.
THREE-POINTERS - MILLS 3, STACEY 3, McRARY.

TITANS DOWN PIONEERS

It was nearly a carbon copy of what happened in the women's game. The Watauga High men's basketball team hung tough early on, but hit a snag in the second quarter and dropped a 72-61 decision in a battle of unbeaten teams at McDowell Tuesday night. An 18-4 run wiped out a 19-17 deficit and gave the Titans (4-0) a 35-23 halftime lead.

Cameron Baker paced the Pioneers (3-1) with a team-high 21 points. His three ball late in the first quarter tied the game at 13-all, and his baseline jumper with 5:04 to play in the second quarter gave WHS it final lead before McDowell took control.

"I really thought we did a great job holding our own in the first half," said WHS coach Rob Sanders. "But that run late in the first half really put us too far behind, and we couldn't make it up in the secnd half."

The Titans increased their advantage to 18 points in the third quarter at 50-32, and eventually stretched their lead to 22 points with 2:11 left in the game. Blake Speros did most of the damage inside.

He poured in a game-high 22 points. Dalanta Rodriquez finished with 12, including a pair of threes in the second half. His three ball in the third quarter gave McDowell a 50-32 lead.

"We told our guys how quick and physical they can be in the lane," Sanders said. "We had a size advantage on them, but they were pretty quick and found some openings inside against our defense. We also missed a lot of close in shots that hurt us, especially in the first quarter. We had some great looks and couldn't finish."

The Pioneers had three players in double figures. Ben Margolis, who was scoreless in the first half, poured in 14 points in the second half, including three trifectas; DeWayne Mackey had nine points, four assists and four steals.

"We've been telling our guys for the last several weeks that we need to do a better job of rebounding and taking care of the basketball," Sanders said. "You can't afford to get sloppy against a team like this, especially on their home floor. This is a tough building to play in. You know coming in that you're going to face some adversity. You can't play on your heels against a team like this."

The WHS men and women get another shot at McDowell in Boone next Tuesday night. The Pioneers wrap up their two-game road trip at Avery Friday night. Coverage begins at 6 p.m. from Newland on Oldies 100.7 FM.

McDowell won the JV game 52-38. The loss snapped WHS' 30-game winning streak (that stretched back to the 2010-11 season). Aaron Dobbins had ten points and six rebounds to pace WHS.

McDOWELL 72, WATAUGA 61

SCORE BY QUARTERS	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**TOTAL**
WATAUGA	13	10	14	24 -	61
McDOWELL	13	23	18	19 -	72

WHS: STURGILL 6 (6 REBOUNDS), MARGOLIS 14, KOPPENHAVER 4 (6 REBOUNDS), BAKER 21, HOWSER 7, MACKEY 9 (4 ASSISTS, 4 STEALS).
THREE-POINTERS - MARGOLIS 3, BAKER, HOWSER, MACKEY.

McDOWELL: LISTER 3, RODRIGUEZ 12, CORPENING 5, MILLER 8, COOPER 4, HELMS 7, SPEROS 22, PYATT 9, HILLMAN 2.

THREE-POINTERS - RODRIGUEZ 2, COOPER, PYATT.