It's hard to believe, but the Avery High basketball team hasn't beaten Watauga since the 2003-04 season. Ironically, WHS coach Rob Sanders was a varsity assistant that year, and the Vikings victimized WHS three times that season---the last time was at the old Colvard Oil Holiday Tournament in Boone. From that point on, the

Pioneers have dominated this series by winning 18 in a row. And their winning ways continued Friday night as they knocked off Avery 55-48 at the Octogon in a non-conference game in Newland. WHS (4-1), which led the majority of the way, last trailed 5-4 early in the first quarter. But from that point on, it was all Pioneers.

"What can I say," Sanders said. "It was a typical Watauga, Avery matchup. Every time these teams get together, especially down here, it goes down to the wire. We expected to see a very good Avery team, and that's just what we got."

Senior Jay Harrill gave WHS a huge lift in the first half. He came off the bench and dropped in 11 points, including three three-pointers that helped WHS to a 29-22 halftime lead.

Harrill hits back-to-back threes that ignited a 12-2 run that gave WHS a 16-7 first-quarter advantage.

"We've been giving Jay a hard time," Sanders said. "He's been shooting the lights out in practice, but he just hasn't been able to find his shot in games. But we knew it was just a matter of time. He had enough open looks tonight and his shots started falling."

But the Vikings (2-4) chipped away and got within two at 34-32 on a three ball by Tre Jackson midway through the third quarter. But WHS eventually pulled away on a 10-2 run for a 44-34 lead. Cameron Baker scored six consecutive points in that run that allowed WHS to pull away.

"We turned up our defensive pressure and forced some turnovers," Sanders said. "We got a lot of transition baskets tonight. That run gave us some breathing room and we held them off."

The Pioneers eventually led by as many as 12 points at 52-40 with 1:45 left to play ona pair of free throws by DeWayne Mackey. The Vikings never got any closer than six point the rest of the way.

The Pioneers had three players in double figures. Harrill, who left the game early in the fourth quarter with a leg cramp, finished with 13 points; Baker finished with 13 points, four rebounds and four steals; Mackey had 12 points and four boards. Tyler Sturgill had seven points.

It was also a very physical game. The teams were whistled for 48 fouls, including a technical foul, and three players fouled out.

"It was pretty physical all night," Sander said. "And Tyler was loaded with hustle tonight. He was real aggressive on the floor and he was all over the place. And we needed that aggression in a game like this. It was a great effort. But we knew this was a much-improved Avery team. Coach (Scott) Polsgrove has made some big improvements with this team. He's got them playing very well."

Payton Lowery led the Vikings with nine points; Shea Buchanan, who fouled out with 3:31 left in the game, and James Stewart each had eight points apiece.

NOTES: WHS won the JV game 50-49 in double overtime. Aaron Dobbins hit the go-ahead basket on a steal in the second overtime period. He finished with seven points and nine

rebounds. Utah Jones led the JV team with 11 points and six board; T.J. Poulos, in his first game back from an ankle injury, had nine points and seven assists; Levi Williams had seven points; Michael Ebaugh had six rebounds; Caleb Bryson had three steals. The boys' JV team is 6-1....Ben Margolis of the Pioneers missed Friday night's game with the flu. The Pioneers wore their home white uniforms Friday night because Avery is still waiting on its new home uniforms.

WATAUGA 55, AVERY 48

SCORE BY PERIODS	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**TOTAL**
WATAUGA	16	13	9	17	- 55
AVERY	10	12	10	16	- 48

WHS: HARRILL 13, STEURY 3, STURGILL 7, AUGUSTINE 2 (4 REBOUNDS), KOPPENHAVER 1, BAKER 13 (4 REBOUNDS, FOUR STEALS), HOWSER 4, MACKEY 12 (4 REBOUNDS).
THREE-POINTERS - HARRILL 3.
FOULED OUT - HOWSER.

AVERY: WATSON 4, STEWART 8, JACKSON 4, S. BUCHANAN 8, POLSGROVE 4, BAUER 6, WOTTELL 5, LOWERY 9.
THREE-POINTERS - JACKSON, WOTTELL.
FOULED OUT - JACKSON, S. BUCHANAN.

PIONEERS LOSE IN HEARTBREAKING FASHION

It just wasn't meant to be. Hannah Margolis had a clean look at the basket with the clock running down and her team trailing 48-46. But Margolis' layup attempt rolled off the rim and the Avery High women's basketball team hung on to beat the Pioneers 49-46 in a non-conference game at the Octogon in Newland Friday night.

It was Watauga's (3-2) second loss in a row after opening the season with three straight wins, and it was also WHS' fifth consecutive loss at the Octogon. WHS hasn't beaten Avery (5-1) in Newland since 2007-08 (Klay Anderson's rookie year as head coach). The Vikings have won five straight since an opening-day loss against the Pioneers (48-45 in Boone) on November 19.

The Pioneers got a huge lift from junior Savanna Wood, who backboned a 23-point assault by the Pioneers in the third quarter. Trailing 27-17 at the break, Wood, who finished with a game-high 20 points, scored the first five points of the second half and got WHS with seven at 29-22. Wood finished with ten points in the period.

The Pioneers blitz Avery 23-8 in the third quarter and built a 40-35 lead. But as explosive as WHS was in the third quarter, the Pioneers lost their scoring touch in the final stanza. The Pioneers scored all of six points in the last eight minutes of the game. The Pioneers have scored all of seven points in the fourth quarter of their last two games.

The Pioneers led 43-39 with 5:26 to play, but a lay up by Kelsie Clark with 2:34 left made it 43-41, and a bucket by Lauren Burleson tied the game at 43 30-seconds later.

Wood, who scored 16 points in the second half, hit her third trifecta of the game that gave WHS a three-point advantage. But Kylie Polsgrove narrowed the lead to one as she hit two free throws with 1:11 to play. Bre Heaton, who ignited a 16-2 run in the first half with three trifectas, buried a three ball with 28 seconds left that put the Vikings on top to stay.

Clark set it up as she attacked the lane and found Heaton all alone on the right side. Heaton finished with 12 points; and Clark, who scored all of her points in the second half, finished with 12 points as well. Margolis, who fouled out with two seconds left in the game, finished with eight points. Claire Harris came off the bench and had ten points.

WHS returns home to play McDowell Tuesday night. Coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: WHS won the JV game, 33-27. Brooklin Carroll led WHS with 14 points. Mary Seramur and Sydney Farthing each had six points apiece. The girls' JV team is 4-3.....Tasha Wilson of the Pioneers injuried her left leg in the second quarter of the varsity game, was aided off the floor and never returned.

AVERY 49, WATAUGA 46

SCORE BY PERIODS	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**TOTAL**
WATAUGA	4	13	23	6	- 46
AVERY	7	20	8	14	- 49

WHS: WOOD 20, MARGOLIS 8, HARRIS 10, McNEILL 4, MAKAROVA 4.
THREE-POINTERS - WOOD 3, MARGOLIS, HARRIS.
FOULED OUT - MARGOLIS.

AVERY: CLARK 12, POLSGROVE 3, SMITH 2, B. BURLESON 4, RIGDON 5, HEATON 12, RAMSEY 3, L. BURLESON 4,
THREE-POINTERS - HEATON 4, CLARK, RIGDON.

Photo Courtesy: Cameron Baker, Rob Moore