Written by Mike Kelly
Saturday, 29 December 2012 11:13

It took nearly a month, but the Watauga High girls basketball team finally righted the ship on Friday. WHS (4-4), led by Hannah Margolis, Savanna Wood and Kaelin McNeill, defeated Alleghany 64-53 in the final round of the Alleghany

Christmas Tournament in Sparta, N.C. The win snapped WHS' four-game losing streak and handed the Pioneers their first win since November 30 (a 47-33 win against Ashe County). Margolis led the way with a season-high 21 points, Wood finished with 15, and McNeill had her most productive game in a month as she poured in 11 points. McNeill had a career-high 14 points against Wilkes Central on November 27.

"And we didn't go through the offensive lull that's plagued us in recent games," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "We kept a consistency on offense the entire game. And we needed it. I really thought we were a step slow defensively today."

The Pioneers, who are 3-0 lifetime against Alleghany, jumped out to an early 9-1 lead. That advantage grew to 26-14 with 4:32 left in the first half. And what looked like a possible lopsided win at the time, turned into a grind.

The Trojans (1-7), mired in a four-game losing streak, came charging back thanks to Laken Blevins, who led all scorer with 26 points. She poured in 15 of her points in the first half, and her three-pointer with 11 seconds left in the second quarter capped off a 7-0 run, and trimmed WHS' lead to five at 26-21.

"And great players will do that," Anderson said. "Blevins is the heart and soul of their team, and she brought them back. But we survived that run."

Apparantly, whatever affected Blevins rubbed off on Kalie Andrews. She scored the first seven points of the second half and gave Alleghany its first lead at 28-27 with 6:22 left in the third quarter. But with the Trojans leading 32-30, the Pioneers went on an 8-0 run and took the lead for good.

"That was an impressive run," Anderson said. "Things weren't going well, especially of late, but we came back and took the lead. It was an important part of the game. They came out with a lot of momentum, but we never lost our confidence. Our girls showed a lot of fight and character during that stretch."

The Pioneers, who scored 38 points in the second half, stretched their lead to 11 points at 47-36, but the Trojans, led by Blevins and Mika Sprinkle, got within two at 47-45 with 2:33 to play. But the Pioneers put the game out of reach by making 12 of 16 free throws down the stretch. Margolis was 7-8 from the line in the fourth quarter.

"It was a good quality win for us, especially with Hickory coming up (January 4) next," Anderson said. "Alleghany really challenged us, and that's what we're going to see when we get into (Northwestern 3A/4A) conference play. This win, especially winning on the road, will give us a lot of confidence going into that Hickory game."

The WHS boys did not play Friday. Their game with the Raleigh Heat was postponed because the Heat elected to play in the City of Durham Holiday Tournament. The WHS boys and girls entertain Hickory next Friday night, January 4. Coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

WATAUGA 64, ALLEGHANY 53

SCORE BY PERIODS	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**TOTAL**
WATAUGA	14	12	19	19 -	64
ALLEGHANY	7	14	18	14 -	53

WHS: WOOD 15, DERRICK 2, WESPHAL 2, MARGOLIS 21, HARRIS 6, McNEILL 11, wELSH 7. FG: 20, 3FG: 3, FT: 15-23.
THREE-POINTERS: WOOD 3.

ALLEGHANY: SPRINKLE 12, ORTON 2, BLEVINS 26, GENTRY 2, REEVES 4, K. ANDREWS 7. FG: 16, 3FG: 4, FT: 9-16.
THREE-POINTERS: BLEVINS 3, K. ANDREWS.

Photo Courtesy: Hannah Margolis, Rob Moore