Written by Mike Kelly
Tuesday, 15 January 2013 14:55

Watuaga High Athletics Director Tom Wright has released the 2013 football schedule. The Pioneers will play an 11-game slate this coming fall, which includes six home dates. The Pioneers will open the season at home against Alexander Central on Friday, August 23 at Jack Groce Stadium.

The Cougars and Pioneers have been conference foes for years, but with realignment taking place in August of this year, the Cougars will be leaving the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference and joining an eight-team Class 3A/4A conference, which includes Mooresville, Lake Norman, Statesville, North Iredell, South Iredell, North Lincoln and West Iredell.

Alexander Central, Lake Norman and Mooresville will be the Class 4A schools in the newly-formed league.

The Pioneers will remain members of the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference, which will include current members, South Caldwell, Hibriten, Hickory, Fred T. Foard, and St. Stephens. Freedom and Patton will join the conference as new members after those schools spent the last four years in the Southern Mountain 2A/3A Athletic Conference.

WHS and South Caldwell will be the only 4A schools in the eight-team conference, and they will meet in the seasons final game in Sawmills on Friday, November 8. The Pioneers will play seven conference games this season.

The Pioneers will also play Wilkes Central this season at Jack Groce Stadium in their endowment game on September 20. It's the first meeting between the schools since 2006 (WHS won 41-18 in Moravian Falls). The Eagles haven't beaten WHS since 1991, and the Pioneers, who have won 11 in a row against Wilkes Central, lead the all-time series 25-13-1. This will be Wilkes Central's first trip to Boone since 2005 (a 29-6 WHS victory).

WHS will also play Freedom this season at home on October 11. It's the first meeting between the schools since 2009, the final year of the old Northwestern 4A Conference. The Pioneers have won two of the last three meetings between the schools, but the Patriots got the last laugh as they rallied to beat WHS 24-17 in Boone in their last encounter.

The Patriots, who were 12-2 last season, made it to the Class 3A Western Regional finals before they were elminiated by Concord. They lead the all-time series with WHS, 28-7-1.

WHS will have home dates with Alexander Central, Wilkes Central, St. Stephens (Homecoming game on September 27), Freedom, Hibriten (October 18), and Hickory (November 1 on Senior Night).

The Pioneers will also have a new coach this season. Wright, who took over on an interim basis and led WHS to a 5-7 record and a state playoff berth, resigned on December 11. The school is currently interviewing potential head-coaching candidates. And according to sources close to the situation, the administration hopes to have a new coach in place by the middle of February.

2013 Pioneer Football Schedule

8/23/13 Alexander Central Home
8/30/13 @ Ashe County
9/6/13 Open
9/13/13 @Avery County
9/20/13 Wilkes Central (Endowment)
9/27/13 Saint Stephens* (Homecoming)
10/4/13 @Fred T. Foard*
10/11/13 Freedom*
10/18/13 Hibriten*
10/25/13 @Patton*
11/1/13 Hickory*
11/8/13 @South Caldwell*

Home Games In Bold
*- Denotes Conference Games

All games begin at 7:30 p.m. unless noted