

Margolis Leads Pioneers Over South Caldwell

Written by Mike Kelly

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Ben Margolis picked up right where he left off last Friday night. The Watauga High senior poured in a team-high 17 points Tuesday night as the Pioneers (8-4 overall; 2-1 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference)

knocked off South Caldwell 61-56 in a NW3A/4A Conference game in Sawmills, N.C. The win also moves WHS into sole possession of third place in the league standings after Fred T. Foard beat St. Stephens 62-57 Tuesday night. The Pioneers travel to Fred T. Foard (weather permitting) Thursday night in a rescheduled game that was postponed on December 17. Margolis scored 11 points, including three three trifectas, in the third quarter. That effort backboned a 21-9 blitz by WHS in the period and turned a two-point halftime deficit into a 49-39 lead after three.

"Ben was really reading their point guard real well in the zone, and he was able to get out and get some deflections and he got the hot hand," said WHS coach Rob Sanders. "We lost some momentum when he got into foul trouble, but we held on."

Margolis, who also had four steals, and Cameron Baker both picked up two quick fouls in the first quarter and spent the majority of the first half on the bench. Margolis was saddled with his fourth foul early in the fourth quarter, and that derailed the Pioneers.

The Spartans (4-9; 2-3), who lost their fourth consecutive game, came charging back and made it close down the stretch. A three ball by Trent Wakefield made it 54-52; a pair of free throws by Jordan Greene with 2:04 to play made it 56-54, and a lay up by Jared Mask with 56.5 seconds left made it 58-56.

But the Pioneers put the game away at the foul line. DeWayne Mackey, who had six points, five steals and seven assists, nailed a free throw that gave WHS a four-point lead with 31 seconds left. And Baker, who finished with nine points and five boards, hit two free throws with eight seconds left to close things out.

"Our biggest weakness at times is ourselves," Sanders said. "They want to win so bad that at times, they go off instinct and don't think. As a coach it's frustrating, but you also love that desire. It's very contagious."

Ben Howser finished with 13 points and eight rebounds. Mask and Jordyn Probst paced the Spartans as they combined for 35 points. Mask finished with a game-high 18 points; Probst finished with 17.

The Pioneers, who are 3-1 on this six-game road trip, travel to Newton to play Fred T. Foard on Thursday night. The Tigers are 0-7 against WHS since they joined the NW3A/4A in 2009-10. But head coach Rob Bliss, now in his second year at the helm, has the Tigers (15-2; 4-0) believing. They've won five in a row, and they find themselves in a first-place tie with Hickory. The Pioneers, in third place, are just 1 1/2 games back.

"Coach Bliss does a great job firing his guys up," Sanders said. "They're going to bust their tails on the floor. They're aggressive on defense and they physical. He's got them contending, and if we're going to have a shot at this thing, we've got to beat them."

Coverage of WHS basketball Thursday night (weather permitting) begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The WHS JV girls defeated South Caldwell, 38-20. Mary Seramur had eight points in

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the win. Rachel Foutz had seven; the WHS JV boys defeated South Caldwell 57-31. Aaron Dobbins finished with 12 points, 10 rebounds and five steals. T.J. Poulos had nine points, eight rebounds, ten assists and five steals. Utah Jones had ten points and five steals.

WHS 61, SOUTH CALDWELL 56

SCORE BY PERIODS 1st 2nd 3rd 4th TOTAL

WATAUGA	16	12	21	12	-	61
SOUTH CALDWELL	14	16	9	17	-	56

WHS: HARRILL 2, STURGILL 2, GAILES 3, AUGUSTINE 2, MARGOLIS 17 (4 STEALS), KOPPENHAVER 4, BAKER 9 (5 REBOUNDS), HOWSER 13 (8 REBOUNDS), MACKEY 6 (7 ASSISTS, 5 STEALS), LAMBERT 3. FG: 14, 3FG: 6, FT: 15-30.
THREE-POINTERS: MARGOLIS 5, GAILES.

SCHS: BARKER 8, MINTON 5, WAKEFIELD 3, PROBST 17, MASK 18, GREENE 5. FG: 15, 3FG: 2, FT: 20-28.
THREE-POINTERS: WAKEFIELD, PROBST