

Pioneers Tough One Out Against Panthers

Written by Mike Kelly

Thursday, 24 January 2013 10:00

The Watauga High boys basketball team didn't show any signs of fatigue Wednesday night. The Pioneers (9-5 overall; 3-2 Northwestern 3A/4A

Conference), who played eight quarters of basketball in an overtime loss against St. Stephens the night before, knocked off Hibriten 59-35 in a NW3A/4A Conference game in Lenior, N.C. Ben Howser, who poured in 29 points against St. Stephens before he fouled out in the final overtime period Tuesday night, sparked WHS with eight first-quarter points.

"He is truly a dominate type of player," said WHS coach Rob Sanders. "The guys love playing with him. He had a breakout game last night, and it leaked over into tonight. He really gave us a charge and got us going."

A three-pointer by Mansa Hunt gave the Panthers (8-9; 1-5) their final lead of the game at 5-4. From there, Howser and the Pioneers took over. WHS went on a 10-0 run and built an 11-point lead at 16-5. The Panthers made a run, but never got any closer than seven points the rest of the way.

And that happened in the second quarter, when the Poineers only scored six points. They led 26-19 at the break.

"We told them before the game that it was going to take a total team effort to win this game," Sanders said. "But we're not about excuses. We just have to show up and go to work. Tonight was an opportunity for us to show not only what type of basketball team we are, but what kind of men we are.

"There's a lot of people in our community going through a lot tougher things in life than just playing eight quarters of basketball one night and four more the next. We told them, 'It's basketball, you love to play this game. Go out and show that you love to play it.' And they did." And the Pioneers delivered the knockout blow in the third quarter. The Pioneers built a 19-point lead in the frame, and they led by as many as 24 in the final stanza. Collin Augustine, who has battled numerous injuries in football and basketball his senior year, came through with a career-high 15 points, 11 of those coming in the second half.

Howser was the only other WHS player in double figures. He finished with 15 points. DeWayne Mackey had seven points; Cameron Baker finished with eight points. Kel Berry paced Hibriten with 18 points, including three trifectas.

He was the only player to score in double figures for the Panthers. And the Panthers, who are loaded with athleticism and speed, never applied any full-court pressure against the Pioneers. WHS also had its way in the paint with a lot of clean looks.

"I was a little bit surprised about that," Sanders said. "With their knowledge of our playing an eight-overtime game last night, they never came after us. I was kind of shocked. They elected to sit back in a zone. I think our guys were expecing a little more pressue, and our biggest concern was not expending a lot of energy in the first half. We wanted to keep our legs as fresh as possible for the second half. But that's the game plan they went with."

The win leaves WHS in sole possession of fourth place. But South Caldwell is just one-half game back after the Spartans (3-3 in league play) defeated Alexander Central 68-65 in double overtime Wednesday night. The Pioneers do own the tie-breaker at the moment because they

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beat the Spartans back on January 15. The Pioneers also trail St. Stephens (4-2 in NW3A/4A) by one game for third place.

"Like I've said all season," Sanders said. "This is a very balanced league. We just have to be ready every time we take the floor. We have some big games coming up. Tonight, we did a good job battling through our fatigue and winning on the road."

WHS returns home to play Fred T. Foard, weather permitting, Friday night. Coverage begins, if they play, at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The WHS JV boys defeated Hibriten, 67-40. Aaron Dobbins paced WHS with 17 points; Utah Jones had 12. T.J. Poulos had seven points, ten assists and five steals; Dillon Carmichael had six rebounds....One final note on Tuesday's overtime game. The state record of 13 overtime periods set by Marmer-Boone Trail and Angier in 1964 is also a national record. And the game was played in Harnett County. The longest overtime game in college basketball before the shot clock came into existence occurred in 1981 between Cincinnati and Bradley. The game went seven overtimes. The longest college basketball game in the shot clock era is six overtimes between Syracuse and UConn in 2009. The longest OT game in NBA history occurred in the 1950-51 season between the Indianapolis Olympians and the Rochester Royals (now the Sacramento Kings). That game went six overtime periods.

WATAUGA 59, HIBRITEN 35

Score By Periods 1st 2nd 3rd 4th TOTAL

WATAUGA 20 6 16 17 - 59

HIBRITEN 11 8 7 9 - 35

WHS: HARRILL 2, STEURY 2, STURGILL 2, GAILES 2, AUGUSTINE 15, KOPPENHAVER 6, BAKER 8, HOWSER 15, MACKEY 7. FG: 25, 3FG: 1, FT: 6-7.

THREE-POINTERS: MACKEY

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HIBRITEN: HUNT 5, CALDWELL 5, POARCH 2, DAVIS 2, BERRY 18, BENFIELD 5. FG: 10, 3FG: 4, FT: 3-8.

THREE-POINTERS: BERRY 3, HUNT.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY'S GAMES

GIRLS:

HIBRITEN 41, WATAUGA 39

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 62, SOUTH CALDWELL 45

BOYS:

WATAUGA 59, HIBRITEN 35

SOUTH CALDWELL 68, ALEXANDER CENTRAL 65 (2OT)