When the week began, Watauga High girls basketball coach Klay Anderson was toying with the idea of pulling off a possible upset at home against one of the top two teams in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference. Well, the Pioneers first attempt

came up short on Tuesday night when Alexander Central (the No.2 seed) rallied behind Marie Ritchie's strong second-half performance and beat the Pioneers by seven points.

And any thoughts of beating the top seed were squelched right away by Fred T. Foard Wednesday night. The Tigers (16-6 overall; 9-1 NW3A/4A Conference) maintained their grip on first place by crushing WHS 70-39 at Lentz-Eggers Gym. The Pioneers (7-12; 2-7), mired in a five-game losing streak, had a brief lead at 3-2 on a free throw by Danielle Welsh. But from that point on, the Tigers took over.

A seven-point run gave the Tigers a 9-3 lead, and the Pioneers never got any closer than four points the rest of the way. The Tigers led 22-9 after the opening eight minutes. The lead grew to 17 points by the second quarter, it was 53-21 in the late stages of the third quarter, and the lead eventually ballooned to 30 points in the final stanza.

Rubbing salt in the wound, senior Brooke Robinson of the Tigers scored her 1,000th career point in the second half before she fouled out with 2:45 left to play. She finished with 13 points. Kayla Whitworth paced the Tigers with 16 points; Courtney Hull had 12 points and Sadasia Tipps had 11. Tipps jump-started the Tigers with nine-first quarter points. Hannah Margolis, who was in foul trouble all night, led the PIoneers with 12 points.

"That's why they're the top team in our league," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "They did a lot of good things tonight. They beat us in every phase of the game. We just have to go back to work, and get ready for our next game Friday night against South Caldwell."

The loss leaves WHS in sixth place in the NW3A/4A Conference standings. The Pioneers trail South Caldwell, which like WHS is struggling, by one-half game for fifth place. The Spartans (6-12, 3-7) have lost seven of their last eight games. WHS trails Hibriten by two games for fourth place and home-court advantage in the opening round of the conference tournament, which begins Monday, February 18.

The Panthers come to town next Tuesday night. South Caldwell comes to town Friday night. The Pioneers defeated South Caldwell in Sawmills on January 15. It was their first win in Sawmills in 16 years. Coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The WHS JV girls defeated Fred T. Foard, 48-17. Brooklin Carroll led WHS with ten points. Madi Brown had eight points; Alina Kosmala and Olivia Reese had six points apiece.

FRED T. FOARD 70, WATAUGA 39

Score By Period	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**Total**
Fred T. Foard	22	12	19	17	70
Watauga	9	10	5	15	39

FTF: DANNER 3, HULL 12, GETTYS 2, HOYLE 2, ROBINSON 13, WHITWORTH 16, TURNER 9, SKEEN 2, TIPPS 11. FG: 28, 3FG: 1, FT: 11-17.
THREE-POINTERS: ROBINSON.

WHS: WOOD 3, DERRICK 2, WESPHAL 1, MARGOLIS 12, HARRIS 1, McNEILL 6, LOFLIN 7, WELSH 7. FG: 12, 3FG: 1, FT: 12-20.
THREE-POINTERS: WOOD.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY'S GAMES

GIRLS:
FRED T. FOARD 70, WATAUGA 39

BOYS:
FRED T. FOARD 69, WATAUGA 41

TUESDAY'S GAMES

GIRLS:
ALEXANDER CENTRAL 56, WATAUGA 49
FRED T. FOARD 56, HIBRITEN 29
HICKORY 66, SOUTH CALDWELL 31
ST. STEPHENS - BYE

BOYS:
WATAUGA 58, ALEXANDER CENTRAL 41

FRED T. FOARD 74, HIBRITEN 48
SOUTH CALDWELL 54, HICKORY 52
ST. STEPHENS - BYE

FRIDAY'S GAMES

SOUTH CALDWELL @ WATAUGA
FRED T. FOARD @ ST. STEPHENS
HIBRITEN @ HICKORY
ALEXANDER CENTRAL - BYE