For the first time in school history, the Watauga High girls basketball team will play a home game in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference tournament, which begins Monday night. The Pioneers (10-12 overall; 5-7 NW3A/4A) clinched the No.4

seed and home-court advantage as they knocked off St. Stephens 38-22 Friday night on the road.

Hannah Margolis paced the Pioneers with a game-high 20 points. She scored 14 of those points in the second half. Her two free throws with 7:50 left in the third quarter snapped a 13-13 halftime tie and gave WHS it's first lead of the game. The PIoneers pulled way from there.

"(St. Stephens coach) Todd Davis is a great person and an excellent coach," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "His girls really came out and played hard. And this is a tough place to play. But our girls showed a lot of toughness and we pulled it out."

Alexander Central aided WHS' cause as the Cougars defeated Hibriten 45-33 in Lenior, N.C. The Pioneers will host Hibriten in the opening-round of the NW3A/4A tournament Monday night at Lentz-Eggers Gym at 6:30 p.m.

Margolis ignited a 10-point run with those free throws to start the third quarter, and the Pioneers, who have won three in a row, took a commanding 23-13 lead with 3:33 left in the period. A bucket by Margolis moments later made it 25-13.

"You can't win a game in the first half, but you could certainly lose it," Anderson said. "But we showed a lot of character in the second half. I thought we played pretty well defensively, but they were getting a lot of loose balls in the first half, and that sparked them."

The Indians, thanks to Keyona Hicks, who scored seven points in the opening stanza, led 11-7 after one. The Indians, who led throughout the first half, led by as many as six points in teh first 16-minutes of the game. But the Pioneers, despite their struggles, managed to stay close and forged a 13-13 tie at the break.

"We could have had glue on our hands in the first half, and the ball would have slipped away," Anderson said. "We couldn't hang on to the ball in the first half. But we came alive in the second half. This is a big game for our program. We had to have it."

Savanna Wood poured in ten points for the Pioneers as they defeated St. Stephens for the seventh consecutive time. The Indians, mired in a nine-game losing streak, haven't won a conference game since 2010-11. They've lost 28 consecutive games in the NW3A/4A. The Indians will be a No.7 seed in the conference tournament, and they will opening post-season play on the road at the No.2 seed against Hickory, Alexander Central or Fred T. Foard Monday night. Those teams finished in a three-way tie for first place.

"Hannah showed a huge desire and a strong passion to win this game," Anderson said. "That's why she's our leader. She made eight consecutive free throws, and she really picked us up in the second half. She had a couple of denials, a couple of steals in the second half, and that turned the tide in our favor."

Hicks led the Indians with seven point; Autumn Williams had six. The Pioneers held St. Stephens to 11 points through the last three quarters of the game.

"Good defense creates easy offense," Anderson said. "We tried to slow them down with our 2-3 zone in the first half, but we also slowed ourselves down. But in the second half, we were much

more aggressive. We started jumping the passing lanes and that created some transition baskets. And that got us rolling.
The only blemish Friday night concerned senior Danielle Welsh went down with a knee injury in the second quarter. She returned to start the second half, but apparantly she reaggravated the injury early the third quarter and did not return. The WHS girls take on Hibriten Monday night at 6:30 p.m.; the WHS boys play South Caldwell at 8 p.m. Coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.
NOTES: The JV girls (13-9) closed out the season by knocking off St. Stephens, 24-21. Madi Brown led WHS with ten points. Sydney Farthing and Brooklin Carroll each had five points apience....Caitlin Westphal missed her second straight game. She's been suspended for violating team rules.

WHS 38, ST. STEPHENS 22

Score By Periods	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**Total**
Watauga	7	6	12	13	- 38
St. Stephens	11	2	6	3	- 22

WHS: WOOD 10, DERRICK 2, MARGOLIS 20, HARRIS 2, LOFLIN 4. FG: 13, 3FG: 1, FT: 9-15.
THREE-POINTERS: WOOD.

STS: KILLIAN 1, WILLIAMS 6, THORNBURG 1, HICKS 7. CALDWELL 3, MENARD 2, McMAHON 2. FG: 4, 3FG: 2, FT: 8-12.
THREE-POINTERS: HICKS, CALDWELL.

INDIANS BLAST PIONEERS, 78-57

The Watuaga High boys basketball team closed out the regular season on a sour note. St. Stephens, which has mastered WHS of late, defeated WHS 78-57 Friday night in St. Stephens in a Northwestern 3A/4A Conference game on Senior Night. DeWayne Mackey scored the game's first field goal and gave WHS (12-9 overall; 6-6 NW3A/4A) its only lead of the game.
It was all downhill from there. The Indians, who have beaten WHS six consecutive times, scored seven consecutive points and jumped on top for good. Trailing 12-4, a three ball by Jay Harrill made it 12-7, but the Indians broke the game open with a 9-0 run for a commanding 21-7 lead. The Indians put the game out of reach by outscoring WHS 18-4 in the second quarter, building a 41-13 lead by the halftime break.
The Indians (18-6; 9-3) led by as many as 33 points in the third quarter, and the Pioneers never got any closer than 54-33 late in the period. But a three ball by Kerrigan Farley at the horn made it 57-33 after three.
Farley, who paced the Indians with 11 first-quarter points, led all scorers with 26 points. Logan Starkey had four threes and finsihed with 18 points; Zack Houston had 13 points. Cameron Baker paced WHS with 16 points and ten rebounds.Mackey had 13 points, three steals and four assists. Collin Augustine had ten points before he fouled out with 10 points.
NOTES: Ben Howser and Ben Margolis did not start Friday night. Margolis has been sick since Tuesday night; Howser rolled his ankle at practice.....The JV boys (18-4; 10-2) won their second NW3A/4A Conference title in a row as they knocked off St. Stephens 71-58 in their season finale Friday night. Aaron Dobbins led WHS with 22 points; Utah Jones had nine points, four steals and six assists....The Pioneers haven't won in St. Stephens since the 2009-10 season.

ST. STEPHENS 78, WATAUGA 57

Score By Periods	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**Total**
Watauga	9	4	19	24	57
St. Stephens	23	18	16	21	78

WHS: HARRILL 10, STURGILL 6, AUGUSTINE 10, MARGOLIS 2, BAKER 16 (10 REBOUNDS), MACKEY 13 (4 ASSISTS, 3 STEALS). FG: 21, 3FG: 3, FT: 6-18.
THREE-POINTERS: HARRILL, AUGUSTINE, MACKEY.

STS: FARLEY 26, CRAIG 3, CORPENING 2, LYNCH 4, HOUSTON 13, McGILL 3, STARKEY 18, LINNEY 3, IJAMES 2, FULTZ 4. FG: 17, 3FG: 10, FT: 14-23.
THREE-POINTERS: STARKEY 4, FARLEY 2, HOUSTON 2, CRAIG, LYNCH.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE

FRIDAY'S GAMES

GIRLS:
WATAUGA 38, ST. STEPHENS 22
HICKORY 82, FRED T. FOARD 59
ALEXANDER CENTRAL 45, HIBRITEN 33
SOUTH CALDWELL - BYE

BOYS:
ST. STEPHENS 78, WATAUGA 57
FRED T. FOARD 62, HICKORY 59
ALEXANDER CENTRAL 50, HIBRITEN 38
SOUTH CALDWELL - BYE

GIRLS STANDINGS:

HICKORY 10-2; 22-2
FRED T. FOARD 10-2; 17-7
ALEXANDER CENTRAL 10-2; 21-3
WATAUGA 5-7; 10-12
HIBRITEN 4-8; 8-15
SOUTH CALDWELL 3-9; 7-14

ST. STEPHENS 0-12; 3-20

BOYS STANDINGS:

FRED T. FOARD 10-2; 20-4
HICKORY 9-3; 19-5
ST. STEPHENS 9-3; 18-6
WATAUGA 6-6; 12-9
SOUTH CALDWELL 6-6; 8-13
HIBRITEN 1-11; 8-15
ALEXANDER CENTRAL 1-11; 8-16