The Hickory High girls rallied from an 11-point deficit and defeated Alexander Central 71-62 in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference Tournament championship game Friday night at Craft Gymnasium in Hickory,. N.C. The Red Tornadoes (24-

2), the No.1 seed among the Class 3A schools in the NW3A/4A, also captured their fourth tournament title in a row.
Trailing 27-16 with 4:52 left in the first half, the Red Tornadoes called a time out, turned on their press and they put together a 14-3 run and trailed 37-31 at halftime.
The Red Tornadoes eventually narrowed the gap to one point at 50-49 at the end of the third quarter. Spreading the floor to start the fourth quarter, Erica Troutman and Yazman Hannah of the Red Tornadoes buried a pair of threes for a 53-50 lead. Hickory ever trailed again. The Red Tornadoes made six of eight free throws down the stretch and Hannah hit three layups to settle the issue.
Farrah Young of Hickory was named the Tournament's Most Valuable Player. She led the Red Tornadoes with 22 points, six assists and four steals; Hannah finished with 21. Kelsie Rhyne led the Cougars (23-4) with 23 points. Hickory also forced 15 turnovers in the second half.
The Cougars and the Red Tornadoes also met for the fourth time this season. The teams split their four meeting right down the middle with two wins apiece. The Red Tornadoes defeated Alexander Central in the Catawba Valley Christmas Tournament in December, but the Cougars swept their two regular-season meetings from the Red Tornadoes in the NW3A/4A Conference. The Cougars will be the No.1 seed among the Class 4A schools in the NW3A/4A Conference when the state playoff pairings come out later today.

FRED T. FOARD 58, HICKORY 46

Rob Bliss continues to work his magic. Bliss, who has a reputation for rebuilding struggling programs, showed off his latest masterpiece Friday night in the finals of the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference Tournament championship game. The Tigers (22-4), who defeated Hickory last Friday night (February 15) in Newton, N.C., to win the regular-season title, repeated the effort by knocking off Hickory 58-46 to win the tournament title on the Red Tornadoes (21-6) home

floor, Craft Gymnasium.
The Tigers won their first conference title since 1993-94 (they won the old Western Piedmont championship that year), and the win also snapped Hickory's two-year reign as tournament champions. It's also Foard's seventh conference championship in school history.
Foard trailed once, when Hickory scored the first basket of the game. From that point on, the Tigers were in complete control. They led 10-5 after one and 25-22 at halftime. A 13-4 run to close out the third quarter extended Foard's lead to ten points after three at 40-30. Senior Spencer Matthews, who was named the Tournament's Most Valuable Player, ignited the run with three steals and a bucket. The Red Tornadoes never got any closer than eight points the rest of the way.
Matthews, who will attend Randolph-Macon College, a Division III school in Lynchburg, Va., finished with 12 points; Joe Isenhour, who will attend Knox College, a Division III school in Galesburg, Il., led the Tigers with 22 points; Brice Falgout had 11.
Zach Jarrett and C.J. Wardrick led Hickory with 12 points each.

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GIRLS
Monday’s first round

No. 2 Fred T. Foard 54, No. 7 St. Stephens 34

No. 4 Watauga 56, No. 5 Hibriten 50

No. 3 Alexander Central 76, No. 6 S. Caldwell 47

Wednesday’s semifinal at Hickory

No. 1 Hickory 54, No. 4 Watauga 33

No. 3 Alexander Central 68, No. 2 Fred T. Foard 56
Friday's championship at Hickory

No. 1 Hickory 71, No. 3 Alexander Central 62

BOYS

Monday's first round

No. 3 St. Stephens 77, No. 6 Hibriten 57

No. 4 Watauga 67, No. 5 S. Caldwell 56

No. 2 Hickory 59, No. 7 Alexander Central 46

Tuesday's semifinals at Hickory

No. 1 Fred T. Foard 61, No. 4 Watauga 43

No. 2 Hickory 74, No. 3 St. Stephens 56
Friday's championship at Hickory

No. 1 Fred T. Foard 58, No. 2 Hickory 46