

UPDATED: Pioneers Blast Eagles, 10-0

Written by Mike Kelly
Wednesday, 03 April 2013 19:38

A win is a win, and right now, Watauga High baseball coach Pete Hardee will take them any way he can get them. And the Pioneers, who suffered an embarrassing 2-1 loss to the East Rutherford JV team on Monday, bounced back and pounded Gaston Christian 10-0 on Wednesday in the consolation round of the East

Rutherford Easter Tournament at McNair Field in Forest City, N.C. The game was called in 4 1/2 innings because of the ten-run mercy rule.

The Pioneers (3-9), who snapped a four-game losing streak, jumped on top early with a four-run outburst in the first inning and never looked back. The Pioneers sent eight men to the plate, and all those runs were unearned, thanks to two costly errors by the Eagles. Blake Cobb made the biggest misuce in the inning when he dropped Carson Isaac's fly ball in right field that plated two runs; Tyler Sturgill, who was mired in a terrible slump, snapped out of it as he delivered a two-run single to center field, giving the Pioneers a 4-0 .

The Eagles (4-9), who haven't scored in two tournament games (East Rutherford beat the Eagles 15-0 Monday night), made six errors and handed WHS nine unearned runs.

"We did what we were suppose to do today," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "Hopefully, this is a game that gets us on a roll. We had a good hard practice yesterday, and it carried over to how we got on and off the field today. And that's important for us. We played hard today, and that's what I'm proud about."

The Pioneers plated three more runs in the second inning. Tyler Jones and Ryder Jones each had run-scoring triples in the frame that handed WHS a commanding 7-0 lead. Chance Richards (1-2) was the benefactor as he picked up his first win of the season. The right hander went five innings, scattered four hits, didn't give up a walk, and he struck out two. The defense also turned three double plays.

"Chance really gutted it out today," Hardee said. "He ran into the fence at practice yesterday, and hurt his knee. It was pretty sore today, but he toughed it out and had a strong outing on the mound. We were strong up the middle today on defense and turned three double plays. We played with a lot of pride today. It was a strong effort."

Hardee also shook up the line up. He moved Jesse Illich into the lead-off spot, he had Tyler Jones batting second, Ryder Jones was batting third, Mason Illich was in the clean up spot. "At least it worked today," Hardee said. "Jesse (who led the team with a .353 batting average when the week began) has really been tagging the ball, and hopefully, moving things around

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like this will give us some punch in the batting order. We hit the ball hard today. We had some solid hits."

Jesse Illich was 3-4 with two runs scored, two stolen bases and a double; Tyler Jones was 2-4 with a triple, a double, two runs scored, a stolen base and an RBI; Ryder Jones was 1-3 with a triple, a run scored and an RBI; Sturgill was 2-3 with two RBI. The Pioneers made nine hits. WHS finally put the game away with three unearned runs in the fourth.

WHS takes on R.S. Central (9-4) in the fifth-place game Thursday at 12 noon. R.S. Central defeated Chase 9-8 in eight innings Wednesday afternoon. Thursday's schedule has been moved back because of rain in the forecast. There's a 100% chance of rain on Thursday with a high of 44 degrees. Tripp Taylor (1-0) gets the starting nod on Thursday, and coverage begins at 11:25 a.m., on AM 1450, WATA.

NOTES: Tyler Jones and Ryder Jones belted WHS' first triples of the year.....Jesse Illich leads WHS with four stolen bases...Ryder Jones leads WHS with four home runs and 12 RBI; Sturgill is second on the team with eight RBI....WHS' team earned-run-average coming into this week was 2.78. The Pioneers have given up 32 earned runs in 90.2 innings through Wednesday's game. The team ERA is down to 2.49....The Pioneers are 2-0 against R.S. Central at the East Rutherford Easter Tournament; they're 1-1 against Chase....The Pioneers have posted consecutive fifth-place finishes in this tournament....Richards lowered his ERA to 2.22....Ryder Jones leads WHS with a 0.64 ERA.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY'S GAMES

EAST RUTHERFORD EASTER TOURNAMENT

WATAUGA 10, GASTON CHRISTIAN 0 (5 INNINGS)

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ALEXANDER CENTRAL 7, SOUTH CALDWELL 3

CATAWBA EASTER CLASSIC

HICKORY 13, NEWTON-CONOVER 5 (THIRD PLACE)

ST. STEPHENS 4, WEST CALDWELL 0 (CHAMPIONSHIP)

THURSDAY'S GAMES

EAST RUTHERFORD EASTER TOURNAMENT

WATAUGA v. R.S. CENTRAL, 12 NOON (FIFTH PLACE)

SOUTH CALDWELL v. EAST RUTHERFORD JV, 2 P.M. (THIRD PLACE)

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ALEXANDER CENTRAL v. EAST RUTHERFORD, 4 P.M. (CHAMPIONSHIP GAME)