

## State Pairings To Be Announced Wednesday

Written by Mike Kelly  
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The Watauga High baseball and softball teams are sitting on pins-and-needles at the moment. Will the season continue, or will they hang up their spikes for

another year?

That's the \$64,000 question haunting WHS baseball coach Pete Hardee and WHS softball coach Stephanie Kostis. And according to Rick Strunk of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association, that question will be answered in a couple of days.

Strunk has announced that the state playoff pairings for both baseball and softball will be released on Wednesday at lunch time. Both the WHS baseball and softball teams are hoping for a wildcard berth that will extend their respective seasons by at least one more game.

But the odds favor the baseball team a little more than the softball team. The WHS baseball team won 15 games (15-11), claimed the No.3 seed in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference and produced quality wins against South Caldwell, Alexander Central (the top two seeds in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference), North Davidson and a double-header sweep of Providence during a 14-game stretch that included a ten-game winning streak.

The WHS softball team, on the other hand, struggled this season. The Pioneers only won six games (6-12), and finished in sixth place (with a 2-10 record) in the NW3A/4A standings. But WHS did close things out with three of its best outings of the season.

The Pioneers dropped a 2-1 decision to St. Stephens at home on Senior Night to close out the regular season; they knocked off South Caldwell (the No.3 seed) in the opening-round of the NW3A/4A Conference Tournament and reached the conference semifinals for the first time since 2010; they lost to Fred T. Foard in the semifinal round.

But that semifinal loss, a 3-1 setback, was a huge improvement, when you consider winning pitcher Lexi Schubert of the Tigers threw a no-hitter against WHS on April 24.

The state playoffs for baseball and softball begin Friday, May 10. The WHS baseball team hasn't missed the state playoffs since 2006; the WHS softball team hasn't missed the state playoffs since 2009.