

## WHS Softball, Baseball Miss Playoffs

Written by Mike Kelly

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The Watauga High baseball and softball teams will both miss the state playoffs this season. WHS baseball coach Pete Hardee and softball coach Stephanie

Kostis got the bad news Wednesday morning.

The WHS softball team (6-12), which put together three of its best efforts of the season before losing to Fred T. Foard in the semifinal round of the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference Tournament, will miss the state playoffs for the first time since 2009.

"This goes to show that we need an indoor facility," Kostis said. "We had a rough spring weather wise, and it really hurt our girls. And with the spring we just had, it shows our need for an indoor facility in this area."

Alexander Central (25-1), the No.1 team in the state in Class 4A and the NW3A/4A Conference regular-season and tournament champion, will open the state playoffs at home against West Mecklenburg (11-9), the No.5 seed from the I-Meck 4A Conference.

South Caldwell (14-7), the No.2 seed, opens the state playoffs at home against Cornelius-Hough (16-5), which won the state championship last spring. The Huskies are the No.2 seed from the I-Meck Conference. The Pioneers defeated South Caldwell in the opening round of the NW3A/4A Tournament.

In Class 3A, Fred T. Foard (20-4), No.1 in the state in Class 3A, takes on Forestview (8-14), the No.4 seed from the Big South Conference in its playoff opener. St. Stephens (14-7), the No.2 seed among the Class 3A schools in the NW3A/4A, travels to West Henderson (10-9), the No.2 seed from the Western North Carolina Athletic Conference, in its post-season opener.

Hibriten (14-8), the No.3 seed from the NW3A/4A, will open the playoffs on the road at Franklin (13-5), the No.1 seed from the WNCAC.

The WHS baseball team (15-11), which won ten in a row and 13 of 14 games down the stretch, will miss the state playoffs for the first time since 2006. A loss to South Caldwell in the semifinals of the NW3A/4A Tournament last Friday doomed the Pioneers.

That loss snapped WHS' ten-game winning streak, and basically killed its playoff hopes.

"I'm proud of our guys, the way we finished the season," Hardee said. "But I really felt we had to win the tournament to assure ourselves of getting in the playoffs. We made our bed with our slow start, and it cost us in the end."

Alexander Central (20-5), which won the regular season championship in the NW3A/4A, will open the state playoffs at home Friday night against Lake Norman (16-8), the No.5 seed from the I-Meck 4A Conference; South Caldwell (14-9), the No.2 seed, will open the state playoffs at Huntersville-Hopewell (15-9), the No.2 seed from the I-Meck. The Spartans, who defeated Alexander Central in the NW3A/4A Tournament championship game last Saturday, nailed down their automatic playoff berth by knocking off WHS.

In Class 3A, Hickory (13-10), the No.1 seed from the NW3A/4A, takes on Kings Mountain (11-10), the No.4 seed from the Big South Conference, at home Friday night in its playoff opener. But the Red Tornadoes must regroup. They lost to Fred T. Foard (11-13) in the opening-round of NW3A/4A Tournament.

The Tigers, who made it to the conference tournament semifinals before they lost to Alexander Central in extra innings, get the No.2 seed, and will open the state playoffs at East Henderson

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(12-11), the No.2 seed from the WNCAC.

St. Stephens (12-9), the No.3 seed from the NW3A/4A, takes on West Henderson (19-3), the top seed from the WNCAC. The state playoffs for baseball and softball begin on Friday.