Written by Mike Kelly
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What seemed like a huge possible upset Friday night at Jack Groce Stadium turned into a disappointing loss for Watauga High.

The Shelby Golden Lions, who have a strong tradition on the gridiron, erupted for 23 unanswered points in the second half, turning a 12-2 halftime deficit into a 25-12 victory, thus spoiling Watauga's home opener.

It's also the third consecutive time Shelby (1-0 record) has beaten WHS (1-1) since the series began. And that huge second-half rally also denied WHS its first 2-0 start since 2006.

A 65-yard scoring pass on third and 19 from quarterback Quinton Hopper to wide receiver Chris Hines made it 12-9 with 6:43 to go in the third quarter. And on their next possession, it took the Lions only one play to take the lead as Dion Cooper rambled in from 67 yards away on his first carry of the game. The Lions scored nine unanswered points in the final period to put the contest out of reach.

WHS took advantage of some sloppy play by the Lions in the first half to build its lead. A fumbled punt by Hines and a ten-yard return by Clint Trivette gave WHS first and goal at the Shelby ten-yard-line. Logan Smith scored on the very next play, giving WHS a 6-0 lead with 9:47 to play in the opening stanza. A safety made it 6-2 after one before the Pioneers pulled off a fake punt and scored on a 74-yard pass play from Mo Gore to Trey Kavanaugh that gave WHS its 12-2 advantage. Unfortunately, the Pioneers ran out of gas in the second half.

Kavanaugh led WHS offensively with five catches for 116 yards. Defensively, the Pioneers bottled up running back Michael Copeland of the Lions, holding him to 14 yards on seven carries. Jordan Pineda had eight tackles, including four solos and a quarterback sack. Alex Fox had eight stops and Smith finished with seven. The Lions also fumbled four times and lost two. The Pioneers didnot commit a turnover for the second consecutive game.

But thanks to a big second half, the Lions racked up 303 yards offensively, including 182 on the ground. The Pioneers finished with 195 yards. WHS travels to Avery next Friday night. Our coverage begins at 6:30 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.

In other games:

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Hibriten 40, Wilkes Central 7

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