

## Rockets hold off WHS, 19-12

Written by Mike Kelly

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The Watauga High football team made a huge statement Friday night against a premier program in western North Carolina.

The Pioneers riding a two-game winning streak nearly pulled off the upset, but came up short as A.C. Reynolds hung on to beat WHS 19-12 at Jack Groce Stadium on retro night. Quarterback Caleb Pressley, who is slowly making a name for himself as a college prospect, was the difference.

The ACR junior ran for 155 yards, scored a touchdown, passed for 78 yards and threw a touchdown pass against the Pioneers. It's the eighth time the Rockets(3-1) have beaten WHS in ten tries.

Devan Corum, who threw his first two interceptions of the year, put WHS (3-2) up early as he hooked up with this favorite target, fellow senior Travis Oliver, on a 29-yard pass to cap off a five play, 45-yard drive in the first quarter. That gave WHS a 6-0 lead, and the WHS, which forced ACR to punt nine times, made it stand up until the final four minutes of the second half.

But Pressley, who was held in check for most of the first half, finally broke through by igniting a five play, 64-yard scoring drive with 3:37 left before halftime. He finished it off with a four-yard run. Ben Councill's extra point put the Rockets up to stay at 7-6. After the Pioneers turned the ball over on downs, the Rockets scored on their final possession of the first half as they marched 61 yards in just four plays. Pressley was the man of the hour as he hooked up with Dameatric Taylor on a 31-yard touchdown pass with 65 seconds to go, giving the Rockets a 13-6 lead at the break. A Mo Gore interception in the third quarter set up Corum's four-yard run to make it a one-point game, but the two-point conversion failed. The Rockets eventually put it away in the fourth quarter with 1:57 left. Patrick Blaylock's interception set up a three-play, 40-yard scoring drive as Carson Gratton scored on a 23-yard run to make it 19-12. And the Rockets sealed it away as WHS fumbled on its final possession.

The loss snapped WHS's two-game winning streak. The Pioneers had 233 yards offensively.

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Corum was 13-28 for 153 yards. Logan Smith led the ground game with 54 yards on nine carries, but he didn't play in the second half. Oliver caught three passes for 76 yards; Trey Kavanaugh had six catches for 64 yards. The Rockets had 314 yards; 236 on the ground. WHS has a bye this week. The Pioneers take on South Caldwell at Jack Groce Stadium October 2. That will also be the Northwestern 3A/4A opener. Our coverage begins at 6:30 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.