

Cougars rally to beat WHS, 28-14

Written by Mike Kelly
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Call it the one that got away

The Watauga High football team was a little less than 11 minutes away from beating Alexander Central for a fourth consecutive time, and nailing down the No.1 seed in the 4A division of the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference Friday night in Taylorsville.

Unfortunately, the Cougars (9-0 overall; 4-0 in the NW3A/4A) erupted for three consecutive touchdowns and beat the Pioneers 28-14 at Cougars Stadium. It was Alexander Central's first win against WHS (5-4; 2-2) since 2006, and it gives the Cougars, who play at South Caldwell next week, the inside track for the No.1 seed. The win also snapped a personal five-game losing streak for Cougars coach Tom Harper.

It was his first win against the Pioneers since 1999, when Harper, then the head man at East Burke, beat WHS 27-14 in Icard.

"We fully expected to come down here to whip these boys," said WHS quarterback Devan Corum. "We'll regroup from this, but it really hurts."

Logan Smith paced WHS with 87 yards on 11 carries and two touchdowns, His one-yard run with 10:54 to play capped off a five-play, 57-yard drive to give WHS a 14-7 lead. But the lead didn't last long.

The Cougars, who have won 11 in a row dating back to last year and own the fourth longest winning streak in the state, took the ensuing kick-off and marched 68 yards in five plays to tie the game. A pair of 32 yard runs on consecutive plays by Logan Chapman (who missed the first six games with a dislocated knee) and Kyle Kinnard aided the march. Kinnard scored on a one-yard run to cap off the drive.

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Kinnard had a monster game for the Cougars. He ran for 109 yards, passed for 78 yards, threw a touchdown pass and scored three touchdowns. The Pioneers went three and out on their next possession, and a fair-catch interference penalty at the WHS 35-yard line gave the Cougars a first down at the Pioneers' 20.

Alexander Central punched it in three plays later on Kinnard's 11-yard run. And an interception by Caleb Price moments later set up a six-play, 33-yard scoring drive and the game's final touchdown as Kinnard scampered in on a nine-yard run on third-and-goal.

"We played real well until the fourth quarter and then it all fell apart," said Robbie Sherrill of the Pioneers. "It's a tough loss for sure. It cost us a home game in the opening round of the state playoffs. But we have Hickory next week, and that's what we have to look forward to."

The Pioneers turned it over three times, and Corum was sacked six times. Blake Baker of the Cougars had three of them. He now has 11.5 on the year.

WHS returns home to play Hickory next Friday night, and our coverage begins at 6:30 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.

In other games:

Hickory 21, St. Stephens 17
Fred T. Foard 20, South Caldwell 17
Hibriten 62, Mooresville 21

Madison 33, Avery 27
Wilkes Central @ Ashe County-postponed and rescheduled for Monday night.