The Watauga High girls basketball team pulled off its first monumental win in more than a decade.

You would have to go all the way back to the Tom Wright era the last time it happened in 1999-2000, when WHS rallied from 25 points down to beat Freedom in Morganton. WHS led from start to finish and defeated Hickory 85-69 Friday night at Lentz-Eggers Gym.

According to WHS Athletics Director Tom Wright the Pioneers (5-8 overall; 2-1 in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) snapped an 83-game conference winning streak, but according to Sports Editor Chris Hobbs of the Hickory Daily Record, the Red Tornadoes (13-2; 4-1) own an 83 game winning streak against schools from the Unifour.

Regardless, the Pioneers pulled off a huge upset win, and in turn a signature win for WHS coach Klay Anderson, now in his third year at the helm.

“This was special,” he said. “What an effort. All I wanted was the chance to be in it in the fourth quarter. But we led wire-to-wire, and didn’t let up. This is huge for our girls.”

WHS, which never trailed, turned a 6-4 lead into a 17-4 advantage early in the opening stanza. The lead eventually grew to 17 points, and Hickory never got any close than five the rest of the way.

Nicole Tesh, who has verbally committed to play volleyball at Emory & Henry College in Emory, Va., led the assault by tying a career high with 29 points. Katherine Mayhew had 18, and Mariah Corbin came off the bench and tossed in 12.

“Winning is an attitude,” Anderson said. “Our girls just went out and played hard. We could easily be undefeated, but we showed a lot of character bouncing back from that loss on Tuesday (against South Caldwell). We just never gave in, even when they made their runs.”

Hillary Sigmon and Jada Payne, Hickory’s all-world guard tandem, combined for 43 points. Sigmon had 25, Payne had 18. But they both fouled out in the final minute of the fourth quarter.

“I’m proud of our girls,” Anderson said. “This is a game they can cherish for years to come.”

Hickory boys 80, WHS 72

The Watauga High boys basketball team was not as fortunate Friday night at Lentz-Eggers Gym. The Red Tornadoes (13-2 overall, 5-0 NW3A/4A) snapped Watauga’s for-game winning streak by beating the Pioneers, 80-72. And the Red Tornadoes did with the speed and athletic talent.

“They have a very deep team,” said WHS coach Rob Sanders. “They don’t lose a thing when they go to the bench.”

The Red Tornadoes had five players in double figures. Denzel Dillingham was their biggest weapon. He led the way with 15 points, and his clutch shooting in the fourth quarter kept WHS (9-4; 2-1) at bay.

“What a job they did with their best player (Tyler Poole) on the bench,” Anderson said. “We got him in foul trouble and they took him out of the game. But they didn’t miss a beat. That’s why they’re such a great team.”

Poole, a 6-6 junior who has verbally committed to Ole Miss, finished with eight points.

But the Pioneers were pesky to say they wouldn't go away. Unfortuantely, they never got any closer than six points the rest of the way. The last time at 77-71 with less than a minute to go, but the Red Tornadoes iced the game away at the foul line.

"That's the mark of our team," Sanders said. "We weren't going to fold. We really believed we could win this game. But we just couldn't pull it off."

Damian Edwards paced WHS with 20 points; Casey Quinn, who had a marvelous second half, finished with 19. And 13 of those points came in the second half.

"Casey did a good job keeping us close," Sanders said. "He made some big shots for us in the second half. It's tough losing this game, but there's still a lot of basketball left and we have to be ready to go next week.

"We have three games in three days, and this conference is extremely strong. We'll get a little rest this weekend and be ready to go Tuesday night."

The Pioneers travel to St. Stephens Tuesday. Our coveage begins at 5:30 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM. Then it's back home to play Hibriten in a make-up game Wednesday and Wilkes Central comes to town on Thursday.

NOTES: The Watauga JV girls win again. They beat Hickory 49-24. Brooke Rhodes had 25 points to pace WHS. The Watauga JV boys lost to Hickory. 68-32.