

## Pioneers win big on Will Dicus night

Written by Mike Kelly

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The Watauga High baseball team retired the No.6 jersey in loving memory of the late Will Dicus on Friday night at Watauga High Field during pre-game ceremonies. Then they dismantled Hibriten 10-2.

Dylan Norris backboned the effort. The junior went the distance, gave up two runs on six hits and struck out eight men. It was a dominating performance on an emotional night.

"I dedicated this game to Will Dicus," said Norris, who improved his record to 5-2. "He loved baseball so much, and I know it really bothered him when he couldn't be out there playing with us. But he was always at our games, and he really supported his teammates."

Norris, who struggled in his last two outings, kept the Panthers in check until the sixth inning. The Panthers finally broke through with run-scoring singles by Cody Poarch and Austin Beard. Otherwise, Norris was in complete control.

"Dylan really attacked their hitters tonight," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "He wasn't messing around out there. He knew how important this game was to our team, and he got the job done."

WHS (11-8 overall; 6-2 in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) finally broke a scoreless tie in the third inning on Matt Proffitt's run-scoring single. Then WHS put the game out of reach with a six-run fourth inning.

Cal Hardee had a two-run homer and Josh Wyant had a two-run double to highlight the frame. In all 11 men batted, and losing pitcher Sean McGarvey, who handcuffed WHS for two innings, suffered the loss by coughing up seven earned runs in three-plus innings of work.

Cal Hardee was 2-4 with three runs-batted-in; Proffitt was 2-2 with two runs scored and two RBI; Josh Roberts had a pair of doubles and scored twice; David Martin was 1-2 with a walk, a sacrifice fly, two runs scored, a stolen base and a RBI. Julius Gaines was Hibriten's (8-10; 2-7) most productive hitter. He was 2-3 with a run scored.

"I was real worried about this game," said Hardee. "I kept bringing up the St. Stephens game (back on March 30). We let those guys stay in the game, and they eventually found a way to beat us.

"But tonight, we just played good, aggressive baseball. We attacked, and we won a big game on a special night (for Will Dicus)."

The Pioneers now find themselves in a second-place tie with South Caldwell in the conference standings. And both teams trail Alexander Central by one game for first place. The Cougars defeated Hickory 11-0 Friday night. Lucas LaSalle paced the offense with a three-run blast.

South Caldwell played a non-conference game and defeated McDowell 8-4 in Marion on Friday night, snapping a two-game losing streak. The Pioneers play Alexander Central at home next Friday night.

"And (the Cougars) are playing with a lot of confidence right now," said Hardee.

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"It looks like it's going to go down to the wire between the 4A schools. Us, South (Caldwell) and Alexander (Central) are neck-and-neck right now.

"But this is what it takes to win a conference championship. And our guys are responding by playing well in pressure situations."

The Pioneers travel to Fred T. Foard Tuesday night, which is their only road game in the month of April. Our coverage of that game begins at 6 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The WHS baseball team now has three retired numbers: No.14 Bobby Welborn, No.12 Drew Newell and No.6 Will Dicus.