

Hardee sets school record, Pioneers win big

Written by Mike Kelly
Thursday, 22 April 2010 03:25

Watauga High senior Cal Hardee marched his team into a second-place tie with South Caldwell in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference last night as the Pioneers smashed Fred T. Foard 8-0 in Newton, NC.

Hardee was masterful as the righthander set a new school record by striking out 16 men. He broke the old record of 14 strikeouts set by Jacob Chaney back in 2000. Hardee was in complete control as he struck out the first six men he faced, and he retired the first 12 men in a row before he yielded a lead-off walk to Jacob Bradshaw in the fifth.

“I felt real strong tonight,” said Hardee. “And I really liked the mound. Everyone told us the mound would be a problem, but it played to my advantage. It really gave me something extra on my fastball.”

Hardee got all the support he needed when Max Linville smacked a two-out, two-run homer in the third inning. It was Linville’s team-leading fourth home run of the year. The Pioneers added two more runs in the fifth before they eventually broke the game open with a three-run outburst in the seventh. But it was Hardee, who grabbed the spotlight.

The senior carried his no-hitter into the sixth inning before Skylar Hollar, who struck out twice, broke it up with a two-out single to left field.

“I’m not a superstitious guy,” Hardee said. “Heck, I told David (Martin) in the sixth inning that we had one going (a no-hitter). It would have been nice if I got it, but the main thing is we won the game. We took care of business, and we beat a struggling team.”

The win moves WHS (13-8 overall, 7-2 NW3A/4A Conference) into a second-place tie with South Caldwell, and it also leaves WHS just one game off the lead behind Alexander Central. And the Cougars, who have won three in a row and seven of their last nine games, come to

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town Friday night.

“And that’s a big game for our team,” said WHS coach Pete Hardee. “We’ve had some huge battles with them over the years. First place, and a possible conference championship are on the line. But I’m extremely confident in this group. They’ve made some impressive strides this season.”

And like any father, WHS coach Pete Hardee admits he was extremely proud of his son.

“It was a super effort on his part,” Pete Hardee said. “Setting a new strike out record like he did was a great job on his part. Part of me in that dugout was being a coach, and the other was being a dad. I’m very proud of him, and I’m also glad one of my sons turned out to be a pitcher.”

The Pioneers return home to play Alexander Central Friday night with first place on the line. Our coverage begins at 6 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.

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