Written by Mike Kelly
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The Watauga High varsity baseball team turned in another solid performance this weekend.

The Pioneers, who won three of their four games, won the North Bumcombe Tournament this weekend at North Bumcombe High School in Weaverville, NC.

The Pioneers defeated North Bumcombe 6-2 in the opening round on Saturday. They followed that up by knocking off T.C. Roberson 10-3 in the second round. Those win moved WHS into the championship game on Sundaty afternoon.

Their only blemish was a 6-2 loss on Sunday.

"But that game didn't matter much," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "We had our spot in the championship game, so I just decided to play a lot of the younger kids."

And WHS came through in the title game and got its revenge for that earlier loss to Murphy. The Pioneers won the championship game by a 5-3 score. Matt Proffitt, who had a stellar weekend, had a two-run homer and held Murphy scoreless for five innings. He was replaced by Jake Watts in the sixth.

Following a shakey start that saw Watts cough up three runs, he settled down and picked up the win.

"Jake was a little sluggish to start out," Hardee said. "But that happens to pitchers. He had to find his comfort zone, and when he did, (Murphy) couldn't touch him."

Trailing 3-2 in the sixth inning, Clint Trivette, who also had a productive weekend at the plate, belted a two-run homer that gave WHS a 4-3 lead. A double by Ethan Critcher and a sacrifice fly by Matt Byrum drove in an insurance run that gave WHS a two-run advantage.

"Our young guys really came through this weekend," Hardee said. "I was real proud of Byrum and of (Corey) Beldon. Those guys did a lot for us. And for two guys that don't play much, they've never given up. They just kept working hard to get their chance."

Byrum had two relief appearances and didn't give up a run; Beldon, a rising junior, had four hits, two stolen bases, and scored a run.

Proffitt had six hits on the weekend, including his two-run homer; Trivette had four hits, including his game-winning, two-run homer against Murphy. Tyler Jones went five-plus innings to get the win in game one against North Bumcombe, and Ethan Greene went 6 2/3 innings and picked up a win in game two against TCR. He also had eight strikeouts.

"That's the best I've seen Ethan throw this summer," Hardee said. "He's got the arm, and he has the talent to be a front-line pitcher for us. But he also turned in a strong game for us at third (base)."

The Pioneers travel to Hickory for a Charlotte Heat tournament this Saturday and Sunday.