

UPDATED: Pioneers Rout Hilltoppers, 9-0

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 27 April 2011 19:56

The Watauga High baseball team broke out of its funk in a big way Wednesday afternoon.

The Pioneers (12-7) bounced back from Monday's disappointing loss by blasting R.S. Central 9-0 in the consolation round of the East Rutherford Easter Tournament at McNair Field in Forest City, NC. Winning pitcher Jake Watts (6-3) secured the issue with a dominated performance. The right-hander went the distance (his fourth complete game of the year), scattered two hits and struck out ten. Watts threw his third shutout of the year, and his ten strikeouts equaled his best effort of the season, which he had done twice before----against A.C. Reynolds in the season opener on March 1 and on March 25 in a 2-0 loss against Hickory.

"Jake did a great job attacking their hitters inside," said WHS pitching coach Cort Radford.

"Jake is one of five seniors on this team, so he knew how important today's game was to us. From the second inning on, Jake was in command. They never really got around on him."

Ben Morris singled in the first inning; Dylan Hipp reached on a two-out single in the third, but he was erased trying to steal. Otherwise, Watts held the Hilltoppers (5-14) in check. And it was also a timely performance for Watts. The Pioneers were in desperate need of a win, especially after Monday's effort against Chase.

"There's still a lot of baseball left to play," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "The season may not have turned out like we would have liked, but we can still turn this thing around and finish strong. It's all a matter of how this team wants to be remembered. We have a reputation and a tradition to protect."

Matt Proffitt gave Watts all the runs he needed with a two-run single in the bottom of the first inning for an early 2-0 lead. He delivered on an 0-2 pitch with two outs. The Pioneers tallied two more times in the fifth, thanks to a walk, a fielder's choice, an infield single by Josh Roberts and two costly errors by R.S. Central. A five-run sixth inning gave WHS a commanding 9-0 lead. Max Linville, who was 3-4 with three runs scored, had a two-run single; Brian Bolster, pinch-hitting for Chandler Bakken, belted a two-run double into right field that ignited the scoring spree. That double was Bolster's first hit of the season in his first at bat of the year.

"The guys made a lot of great plays behind me," Watts said. "My defense was very good, as usual. But this was a big win for us, especially with the (Northwestern 3A/4A) conference tournament coming up next week. One through nine all hit the ball today, and Bolster had a big hit in the sixth. It's been a frustrating year. We were suppose to be lights out when the season began, but we have to win (Thursday) to build momentum. We're fighting to make the playoffs, and every game is big right now."

The Hilltoppers made four errors on the day. Losing pitcher Kevin Miller, who did a good job keeping his team in the game before he ran out of gas in the sixth, only gave up three earned runs on six hits with four strike outs. But the Pioneers did a good job capitalizing on those R.S. Central mistakes. Proffitt drove in three runs, Ethan Critcher was 2-3 with a run scored, and David Martin, batting in the lead-off spot for the first time in his career, walked twice and scored

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twice.

The Pioneers move into the fifth-place game on Thursday afternoon. They will play Team Carolina (a home school team) at 2:30 pm. Our coverage begins at 2 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM. Team Carolina advanced by beating Hickory Ridge 8-7 in 11 innings.

WEDNESDAY'S SCOREBOARD:

@ EAST RUTHERFORD:

WATAUGA 9, R.S. CENTRAL 0

TEAM CAROLINA 8, HICKORY RIDGE 7 (11 INNINGS)

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 4, CHASE 3

SOUTH CALDWELL 8, EAST RUTHERFORD 7

THURSDAY'S GAMES:

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7TH PLACE: HICKORY RIDGE v. R.S. CENTRAL 12 NOON

5TH PLACE: WATAUGA v. TEAM CAROLINA 2:30 PM

3RD PLACE: CHASE v. EAST RUTHERFORD 5 PM

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME: SOUTH CALDWELL v. ALEXANDER CENTRAL 7:30 PM

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@ CATAWBA VALLEY CLASSIC:

FRED T. FOARD 8, WEST CALDWELL 3 (THIRD PLACE GAME)

BUNKER HILL 11, HICKORY 3 (CHAMPIONSHIP GAME)

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