

Poulos, Sturgill Save Pioneers

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 21 January 2012 13:32

When your best player has an off night, it's up to the other guys to pick up the slack. Well, that's exactly what happened Friday night. Jake Pifer was kept in check, but Ethan Poulos and Tyler Sturgill both stepped up big as the Watauga High men's basketball team knocked off Fred T. Foard 51-44 at Jerry Copas Gymnasium in Newton, NC. The win moves WHS (8-9 overall; 4-3 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) a game over

.500 in the NW3A/4A Conference and in a third-place tie with St. Stephens. The Indians dropped a 51-40 decision to Alexander Central at home Friday night.

"What can I say about Ethan," said WHS coach Rob Sanders. "He saw that Jake wasn't scoring, so he took it upon himself to score. Someone has to step up, especially when your best player is having an off night. I was blown away by Ethan. He hit some big shots. And Tyler, he got a lot of his points on just plain hustle and hard work. Those guys did a great job. It really helped us."

Pifer was held to a season-low eight points; Poulos finished with eight points, all of them in the third quarter, and Sturgill had 14 (both season and career highs for Sturgill and Poulos). And the Pioneers, who briefly trailed 11-10 early in the second quarter (on Brice Falgout's layup with 7:09 left in the first half), took command of the game in the second period.

WHS went on a 13-point run and led the Tigers 23-11 at halftime. The Pioneers eventually built their advantage to 17 points in the third quarter. But with WHS leading 44-29 early in the final period, the Tigers (11-7; 1-6), who have lost three in a row and four of their last five games, slowly chipped away and made of run at WHS.

The Tigers methodically put together a 13-3 run and got within 47-42 with 1:45 to play. Jordan Turner converted a three-point play, drawing the Tigers within five points.

"A Rob Bliss-coached team isn't going to quit," Sanders said. "I knew they would make a run at us. They made us earn it tonight. But I really thought we played a lot better than we did against Hibriten (Wednesday night). We made better decisions, especially on the offensive side. But we still made some mental mistakes defensively."

And Pifer, despite his so-so night, had the final word in nailing down the win. Pifer hit a free throw with 1:34 to go, and his breakaway slam dunk on a feed from Ben Margolis with less than a minute to play settled the issue, giving the Pioneers a 50-42 lead.

"It's so emotionally and physically straining to go through these types of games, and we had three of them this week," Sanders said. "This was a big win, and a huge confidence booster, especially with Hickory coming in Tuesday night.

"But like we told the guys before the game, 'win tonight, and we could be tied for third place in the league.' All we can do is take care of ourselves right now. We can't depend on other people. We just need to go out, take care of business and not worry what the rest of the league is doing. If we approach it that way, you never know where you can end up with three losses in the league."

Margolis was the only other player in double figures for WHS with ten points and four assists; Matt Proffitt had three points, seven boards, four steals and four assists. Poulos had four steals, and Pifer finished with five rebounds and two blocked shots. Falgout led the Tigers with 16 points. Turner finished with 12.

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The Pioneers have also beaten the Tigers six consecutive times since the NW3A/4A was formed in the 2009-10 season.

"Now we have to ready ourselves for Hickory," Sanders said. "We've got to step on that floor Tuesday night (at Lentz-Eggers Gym) and believe we can win. Hickory (6-0 and in first place) has a great team. We must control the tempo of the game. If we get caught in a running game with them, they'll run us right out of the gym."

The Pioneers defeated Hickory at home last year. It was their first win against the Red Tornadoes since 1993. But going into this season, Hickory is 62 and three in league play the last five seasons and they've won four consecutive conference championships. The Red Tornadoes defeated WHS 67-36 in their first meeting on December 16. Our coverage begins at 6 p.m. Tuesday night on Oldies 100.7 FM.

WHS 51, FRED T. FOARD 44

SCORE BY PERIODS □ 1ST □ 2ND □ 3RD □ 4TH □ TOTAL

WATAUGA..... 9 14 15 13 51

FRED T. FOARD..... 9 2 13 20 44

WHS: PIFER 8 (5 REBOUNDS, 2 BLOCKED SHOTS), POULOS 8 (4 STEALS), PROFFITT 3 (7 REBOUNDS, 4 STEALS, 4 ASSISTS), MARGOLIS 10 (4 ASSISTS), HOWSER 5, CHASTEEN 3, STURGILL 14.

FOARD: MATTHEWS 2, SIMS 2, TURNER 12, DICKENS 8, FALGOUT 16, KIRK 4.

TIGERS RIP PIONEERS, 55-37

It certainly didn't turn out like Watauga High women's basketball coach Klay Anderson had hoped.

Fred T. Foard, thanks to a three pointer by Hannah Skeen to close the opening period, defeated WHS 55-37 at Jerry Copas Gymnasium in Newton, NC. The win also pulled Fred T. Foard into a fourth-place tie with the Pioneers in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference, and a split in the season series.

"(Fred T. Foard) is very hard to defend against," Anderson said. "They have size, and they're athletic. And they used it well against us. They had a lot of fast-break baskets in the first half." The Tigers (10-8 overall; 3-4 NW3A/4A) jumped out to a 7-0 lead. But the Pioneers (5-12; 3-4), thanks to some nifty shooting at the foul line (they made eight straight free throws), came back to tie the game at 10-10. But Skeen's three at the horn put the Tigers on top to stay. From there, Foard was in complete control.

The Tigers outscored WHS 23-7 in the second quarter and took a commanding 36-17 lead at the intermission. The lead eventually ballooned to 21 points early in the third quarter before the Pioneers changed things up. WHS switched to a 2-3 zone and slowed the game down to a walk. And it had an affect as the Pioneers chipped away and outscored the Tigers 13-5 in the third quarter.

"We challenged our girls at halftime," Anderson said. "Even though you might think you're giving your best, there's always that extra 20 percent. And we gave that tonight in the third quarter. We fought, we scrapped, we clawed and got back in the game. But we ran out of ammunition in the fourth quarter. Fred T. Foard just played a great game tonight."

The Tigers, who led 41-30 to start the fourth quarter, quickly built their lead back to 16 points and waltzed home. Brooke Robinson led the Tigers with 18 points, 15 of those coming in the first half. Chelsea Turner had 11, Kayla Whitworth, who was in foul trouble most of the night, and Skeen each had ten points. Hannah Margolis had 14 points to pace the Pioneers.

Freshman Haleigh Wallace had a season-high, and a career high eight points.

"They played extremely intelligent against our (3-2) zone," Anderson said. "And we mixed it up in the third quarter to slow them down. It had an affect, but they forced a lot of turnovers up top, and it resulted in a lot of transition baskets for them. But we did have some open looks, and our shots just weren't falling, especially in the fourth quarter. Man, had we made a few of those

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shots and got it within four or five points, it would have been an interesting in the fourth quarter. We just ran out of gas."

The WHS men and women return home to play Hickory Tuesday night. Our coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The JV girls defeated Fred T. Foard, 48-19. Clare Harris led the Pioneers with ten points. Rachel Foutz and Brooklin Carroll each had eight points.....The JV boys (17-0) won their 17th consecutive game by knocking off Fred T. Foard, 40-22. Following a slow start---the Pioneers only led 12-10 at halftime---they broke the game open by outscoring the Tigers 10-2 in the third quarter, building a 22-12 lead. Cameron Baker had 15 points and nine rebounds; Jake Chasteen had 14 points and nine boards. T.J. Poulos had five points and three assists. Matt Lambert had two points, two steals, four assists and three blocked shots.

FRED T. FOARD 55, WATAUGA 37

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WATAUGA 10 17 13 7 37

FRED T. FOARD 13 23 5 14 55

WHS: WOOD 3, DUNNIGAN 6, WALLACE 8, EPPLEY 2, MARGOLIS 14, McNEILL 2, WELSH 2.

FOARD: HULL 2, HOYLE 4, ROBINSON 18, WHITWORTH 10, TURNER 11, SKEEN 10.

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FRIDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

WOMEN:

FRED T. FOARD 55, WATAUGA 37
ALEXANDER CENTRAL 73, ST. STEPHENS 31
SOUTH CALDWELL 61, HIBRITEN 38

MEN:

WATAUGA 51, FRED T. FOARD 44
ALEXANDER CENTRAL 51, ST. STEPHENS 40
HIBRITEN 57, SOUTH CALDWELL 45

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OTHER GAMES:

WOMEN: STARMOUNT 53, ASHE COUNTY 51

MEN: STARMOUNT 56, ASHE COUNTY 53