

## Cougars Dominate Pioneers

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 01 February 2012 09:15

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It's plain and simple, both the Watauga High men's and women's basketball teams didn't play very well Tuesday night. The end result, both teams dropped lopsided affairs on the road in Taylorsville. The WHS women

(5-14 overall; 3-6 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) got blown out by Alexander Central 57-30; the WHS men (8-11; 4-5) suffered a similar fate as they got blasted by the Cougars 71-56 at Cougars Gym. In turn, both the Alexander Central men and women nailed down the No.1 seed among the Class 4A schools in their respective divisions in the NW3A/4A Conference.

In the women's game, the Cougars settled the issue rather quickly. Leading 5-4, and with WHS's best player Hannah Margolis saddled on the bench with three quick fouls (she left the game with 3:16 to play in the opening stanza), the Cougars went on a 14-0 run and grabbed a commanding 19-4 lead. They outscored WHS 22-9 in the second quarter and led 38-13 at the intermission. Kelsie Rhyne, who led the Cougars (16-5; 8-2) with 16 points, and Maty Setzer, who poured in 11 points, each had three three pointers apiece in the first half assault. Freshman Madi Suddreth finished with 15 points.

The lead eventually ballooned to 30 points in the second half. Savanna Wood led WHS with 13 points, including three three pointers; Margolis finished with 11 points, nine of those in the second half. The Cougars, who remain in second place, a game-and-a-half behind Hickory (20-1; 9-0), also pulled off their first regular-season sweep of the Pioneers in six years. The last time they did it was in 2006-07. Alexander Central has won seven of its last eight games. The loss leaves WHS in fifth place, and the Pioneers now trail Fred T. Foard (12-9; 5-5) by a-game-and-a-half for the No.4 seed and home-court advantage in the opening-round of the NW3A/4A Conference tournament with three league games left on the schedule.

In the men's game, it was much of the same. The Pioneers took a brief 2-0 lead on a bucket by Tyler Sturgill in the first quarter. And it was all downhill from there. Despite a brief rally sparked by Ben Margolis late in the second period that brought WHS within seven points of the lead at 20-13, the Cougars (16-5; 9-1) were in total control.

And senior Alex Ayer was pushing all the right buttons as he simply dominated the Pioneers. Ayer finished with a game-high 34 points, including 19 in the second half.

"He really picked up his game after the first quarter," Alexander Central coach Ed Wills said.

"He's long and athletic. That allows us to move him all over the floor. And when he's on, like he was tonight, he's a tough matchup for opposing teams."

Ironically, Ayer was the only player in double figures for the Cougars. Luke Bean came off the bench and scored eight points; Tyler Crouch and Matt Mohon each finished with six points apiece. The Cougars led by 11 at the halftime-break, and they built their lead to 29 points in the second half. The win also leaves Alexander Central in sole possession of first place. But Hickory (18-3; 8-1) remains a game-and-a-half back in second place. The Red Tornadoes, who had their 14-game winning streak snapped by Alexander Central last Friday night, defeated South Caldwell 70-54 Tuesday night.

"Our margin for error is very slim," Wills said. "Hickory has a tremendous team, and this is a very tough conference. Every game is so competitive. I was real worried about tonight's game against Watauga. They always play hard and they cause a lot of havoc. It's hard to play against

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them. But we have to play a certain way to win, and tonight, our seniors stepped up big again. This is another step towards our goal of winning the conference title. But we're not done yet." Jake Pifer led WHS with 27 points, all of them in the second half. He also buried five three pointers. Margolis finished with nine points; Ethan Poulos had five points, five assists and three steals; Allan Koppenhaver had six rebounds.

The Cougars also pulled off their first season sweep of the Pioneers since the 2007-08 season. And the loss leaves WHS in fourth place, one game behind St. Stephens, which had the night off, for third place. The WHS men and women travel to South Caldwell Friday nighth. Our coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

**NOTES:** Whitney Dunnigan did not play for the WHS women Tuesday night. She suffered an injury in practice on Monday.....The JV boys (19-0; 9-0) remained undefeated as they knocked off Alexander Central 56-30 Tuesday night. Jake Chasteen led the way with 16 points, four rebounds and five steals; Matt Lambert had 11 points; Jay Harrill had nine points; Jonathan Plyler had eight points. Cameron Baker had four blocked shots, and T.J. Poulos had five assists.....The JV girls dropped a 52-23 decision to the Cougars. Clare Harris had eight points in the loss.

## WOMEN:

## ALEXANDER CENTRAL 57, WHS 30

SCORE BY PERIODS	1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	TOTAL
WATAUGA.....	4	9	10	7	30
ALEXANDER CENTRAL..	16	22	11	8	57

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**WHS:** WOOD 13, SEAMONE 2, MARGOLIS 11, DERRICK 2, WILSON 2.

**ACHS:** RHYNE 16, WIKE 4, SETZER 11, SHARPE 2, FERGUSON 2, RICHIE 5, DETTER 2, SUDDRETH 15.

**MEN:**

**ALEXANDER CENTRAL 71, WHS 56**

<b>SCORE BY PERIODS</b>	<b>1ST</b>	<b>2ND</b>	<b>3RD</b>	<b>4TH</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
WATAUGA .....	3	12	16	28	56
ALEXANDER CENTRAL..	9	17	22	20	71

**WHS:** PIFER 27, POULOS 5 (5 ASSISTS, 3 STEALS), PROFFITT 4, MARGOLIS 9, HOWSER

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2, CHASTEEN 2, STURGILL 7.

**ACHS:** BEAN 8, SMITH 2, FORD 3, BIRKENDAL 5, CROUCH 6, MILLER 3, QUIGLEY 2, AYER 34, J. WATTS 1, STARNES 1, MOHON 6.

## TUESDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

### WOMEN:

**ALEXANDER CENTRAL 57, WATAUGA 30**

HICKORY 52, SOUTH CALDWELL 45

FRED T. FOARD 71, HIBRITEN 43

ST. STEPHENS - BYE

### MEN:

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### **ALEXANDER CENTRAL 71, WATAUGA 56**

HICKORY 70, SOUTH CALDWELL 54

FRED T. FOARD 52, HIBRITEN 46

ST. STEPHENS - BYE

### **FRIDAY NIGHT'S GAMES**

#### **(MEN & WOMEN)**

#### **WATAUGA @ SOUTH CALDWELL**

HICKORY @ HIBRITEN

ST. STEPHENS @ FRED T. FOARD

ALEXANDER CENTRAL - BYE