

Pioneers Open Playoffs At East Gaston

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 18 February 2012 22:27

The Watauga High men's basketball team has earned a No.9 seed in the Western Pod and the Pioneers will open the state playoffs on the road Monday night in Mount Holly, N.C., against East Gaston, the No.8 seed at 7 p.m. (our coverage begins at 6:40 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM). The WHS women

(7-16) did not make the state playoffs. It's the first time they've missed the playoffs in five years (2006-07).

The Warriors (10-14 overall; 4-8 in the Mega 7 Conference) are averaging 62 points a game. They are led by six-foot-two sophomore Desean Murray, who is averaging 15.4 points-per-game. He is shooting 54% from the floor, but only 57% from the free-throw line. He's also pulling down an average of ten rebounds a game. Robbie Sterling, a 6-7 senior, is their second-leading scorer. He's averaging ten points and nine boards a game; Elijah Gore is their third-leading scorer. He's averaging nearly nine points a game and he's shooting 42% from the floor. Gore is also averaging better than four assists a game. Senior Tyler Persinger is their best three-point shooter. He's made a team-high 36 threes, and he's shooting 39% from behind the arc.

The Warriors are also averaging 34 rebounds and nearly nine steals a game. But the Warriors are struggling of late. They're mired in a three-game losing streak. Their last win came against South Point on February 3.

The Pioneers, who came up short in their upset bid against Hickory last Wednesday in the semifinal round of the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference Tournament, are 4-7 in their last 11 games. And the Ploneers (10-14) haven't won a state playoff game since they beat Garinger back in 2009-10 in a second-round game at the old Lentz-Eggers Gym. The Pioneers lost to Charlotte Vance in the opening-round of the state playoffs last year.

WHS finished as a No.4 seed in the NW3A/4A Conference, but the Pioneers were a No.2 seed among the Class 4A schools in the league. East Gaston was a No.5 seed in the Mega 7 Conference, but a No.2 seed among the Class 4A schools.

The winner of this game will play either South Caldwell (10-13), the No.16 seed, or Charlotte-Olympic (25-1, the Trojans lost the MEGA 7 title game to Harding University High in overtime Friday night), the No.1 seed in the Western Pod, in a second-round game Wednesday night. If South wins, the Ploneers would be at home. If Olympic wins, the Ploneers will travel to Charlotte. South Caldwell is making its first appearance in the state playoffs since the 2006-07 season.

Alexander Central, which lost to Hickory in the NW3A/4A title game Friday night, earned a No.4 seed, and the Cougars (20-6) entertain East Mecklenberg in the opening round. The Cougars had their 12-game winning streak snapped by Hickory Friday night.

In Class 3A, Hickory (23-3), the regular-season and tournament champions in the NW3A/4A, is a No.2 seed in the West and will host East Henderson; St. Stephens (15-11) is a No.8 seed and will host last year's state champion, Hunter Huss; Fred T. Foard (13-11) is in the state playoffs, and the Tigers, a No.12 seed, travel to Enka.

In Class 2A, Ashe County has earned a No.1 seed in the West, and the Huskies (24-3) will host Maiden in a first-round game; Avery did not make the state playoffs.

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On the women side, Alexander Central (18-7), which is in the state playoffs for the first time since the 1990-91 season, is a No.3 seed in the West and entertains West Charlotte; South Caldwell (16-10), which lost to Hickory in the NW3A/4A finals Friday night, is a No.9 seed and travels to Cornelius-Hough.

In Class 3A, Hickory (25-1), the regular-season and tournament champions in the NW3A/4A, is a No.1 seed in the West and will entertain Belmont-South Point in the first round; Fred T. Foard (14-11) is a No.9 seed and travels to Freedom; Hibriten, despite winning five games (the Panthers were 5-17), is a No.15 seed and travels to R.S. Central.

In Class 2A, Ashe County missed the state playoffs for the first time in eight years; in Class 1A, Avery (17-7) is a No.2 seed in the West, and the Vikings open at home Monday night against Rosman.

The higher seeds will host games on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of this week. All games will tip-off at 7 p.m. But if there is a double-header scheduled, games will be played at 6:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.