

## The One That Got Away

Written by Mike Kelly

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It just wasn't meant to be. The Watauga High baseball team built an early 5-0 lead and couldn't hang on as Davie County came charging back to beat the Pioneers 6-5 in a non-conference game at

Mando Field in Mocksville. Karch Arey's run-scoring single with two outs in the bottom of the sixth drove in Ben Beeson, who reached on a lead-off single, with the eventual winning run. It was a disappointing loss for the Pioneers (3-3), who have dropped three in a row after they began the year with three consecutive wins.

"I'm proud of our team," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "We played hard against a very good team. You can't give a team like this too many chances, because they'll find a way to come back. We made a mistake, and they jumped on it. It was all down hill from there."

WHS's downfall came in the fifth inning. Losing pitcher Ethan Greene was cruising along with a 5-0 lead. But with two outs, all that changed. Arey reached on an error and the flood gates opened. Three consecutive singles by Nick Boswell, Ryan Foster and Corey Randall plated a pair of runs that made it, 5-2. Matt Vernon, a Mocksville native who transferred in from Forsyth Country Day and who has signed with North Carolina State, capped off the rally with a three-run homer to straight-away center field that tied the game.

"Davie has a great program and a great tradition," Hardee said. "They did a great job coming back. Like a lot of great teams, we opened the door and they came crashing through. It's a tough one to lose."

But the War Eagles (5-0), who were ranked fifth by Impactbaseball.com in its pre-season Class 4A poll, didn't look like a state-ranked team early on. They made five errors, including four in a row in the fourth inning, that handed WHS five unearned runs. But Foster (3-0), who picked up the win, kept the Pioneers in check. The right hander scattered five hits and struck out 11. He struck out seven in a row during one stretch. Greene (2-1), who suffered his first loss of the year, pitched well in defeat.

The right hander went five innings and gave up six runs, but only one earned (thanks to three WHS errors), on seven hits with five strikeouts.

"Greenie pitched well tonight against a very good hitting team (the War Eagles had scored 46 runs in their first four games of the season)," Hardee said. "But we didn't make a couple of plays behind him, and they made us pay for it. We have a lot of work to do before our next game (Friday against Alexander Central)."

Taylor Shuford, who made his first start of the year at first base, and Brian Bolster, who made his first start of the season as a designated hitter, each had a hit and an RBI. Greene drove in a run with a sacrifice in the fourth.

The Pioneers return home to play Alexander Central in their home opener Friday night. Senior Matt Proffitt will also make his first start of the year on the mound. Our coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

**NOTES:** The Pioneers will be hosting a benefit game for 11-year-old Brady Bakken Friday night. Bakken has been diagnosed with Burkitt's Lymphoma, and he is receiving treatment at Brenner Children's Hospital in Winston-Salem. A portion of the proceeds from Friday's game will be donated to the Bakken family to help with medical costs. The Pioneers will also wear lime

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green tops to show their support in the fight against Burkitt's Lymphoma. Lime green t-shirts and bracelets will also be sold at the game.....Davie County won the JV game, 11-0. The JV team only made two hits.....The Pioneers will play at Ardrey Kell on Saturday in a make-up game that was rained out March 3. The JV game begins at 12 noon; the varsity game begins at 2:30 p.m.