

## Proffitt Stands Tall Against Cougars

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 17 March 2012 07:18

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It took a little while for Watauga High senior Matt Proffitt to find his groove on the baseball diamond. An honorable mention all-conference performer in basketball this season, Proffitt has slowly rounded himself into baseball-playing shape. And Alexander Central got a taste of it Friday night. The right hander making his debut

in the starting rotation mowed down the Cougars as the Pioneers (4-3 overall; 2-1 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) prevailed 8-0, snapping a three game losing streak. Proffitt went the distance, scattered five hits and struck out seven as he picked up his first win of the year. He now has 17 strikeouts in 12 1/3 innings of work this season. And he remains unblemished on the mound without giving up a run this season.

"It's getting there," Proffitt said. "It's just a matter of getting my timing back. I've just been working hard to get myself back into shape. Tonight, my fastball wasn't really working that good, so I mixed things up a little bit. I felt comfortable out there."

And he also felt comfortable at the plate. Proffitt ignited an eight-run rally in the fourth inning as he led off the frame with a solo home run---his first of the year and only the second hit by WHS as a team this season. He followed that up with a two-run double in the frame. The Pioneers sent 12 men to the plate, snapping a scoreless tie and breaking the game open with an eight-run explosion. The Cougars (1-7; 0-4) used three pitchers in the inning in hopes of quieting the rally.

"Matt has really been putting time in the batting cage," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "That home run he hit wasn't aided by the wind. It was all him. He's been hitting like that for us since he was a sophomore. And I was impressed with him on the mound. He changed things up, kept them off balance and dominated their hitters at times. Proffitt's a very good player, and he came through with a big effort for us tonight."

The win keeps WHS in the hunt for a conference championship. The Pioneers find themselves just a game-and-a-half behind South Caldwell for first place (and in a three-way tie for second place with Hickory and St. Stephens). The Spartans (8-0; 4-0), who play WHS in Sawmills Tuesday night, defeated Hickory 8-0 Friday night. Winning pitcher Spencer Greer threw a no-hitter. He struck out 13 men and walked three. He also becomes the first South Caldwell pitcher to throw a no-hitter since Madison Bumgarner (now with the San Francisco Giants) did it in 2007.

"I'm not at all concerned about the other scores, or the standings this season," Hardee said.

"Like I told our guys, 'we really need to take care of ourselves.' We can't control what happens in this league. When you start to worry about what other teams are doing, you start putting unnecessary pressure on yourself. This game is tough enough to play without all that."

But the Pioneers, who have struggled with their hitting in recent games, left nine men on base, seven in scoring position. WHS left three men in scoring position through the first three innings of the game before they broke through in the fourth.

"it's a matter of consistency," Proffitt said. "We definitely have the talent on this team. We just have to be more consistent. But we came through with the big inning tonight. I'm just glad I got to contribute."

Proffitt was 2-3 with three RBI; Max Linville had two hits, walked twice, had two stolen bases

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and drove in two runs; Ryan Turner had a pair of hits; Tyler Jones doubled and scored; David Martin drove in a run with a sacrifice fly; Ethan Critcher had a run-scoring triple; and Chandler Bakken drove in a run. The Pioneers made nine hits.

The Pioneers travel to Sawmills Tuesday night to play South Caldwell. Ethan Greene (2-1) will get the starting nod. Our coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

**NOTES:** The Pioneers have now beaten Alexander Central three consecutive times dating back to last year.....The Cougars have lost six in a row.....The Pioneers wore lime green tops in honor of Brady Bakken, an 11-year-old boy and the younger brother of Chandler Bakken, who is battling Birkett's Lymphoma, a type of malignant cancer. It is named after a surgeon who discovered the disease in Africa. Even though it is rare, it is curable.....Alexander Central won the JV game 6-3 with a three-run rally in the top of the sixth. The JV team suffered its first loss in league play.

## **NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE**

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

**WATAUGA 8, ALEXANDER CENTRAL 0**

HIBRITEN 3, FRED T. FOARD 1

SOUTH CALDWELL 8, HICKORY 0

ST. STEPHENS - BYE

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### **SATURDAY'S GAMES**

HIBRITEN @ WEST WILKES

### **TUESDAY NIGHT'S GAMES**

**WATAUGA @ SOUTH CALDWELL**  
ST. STEPHENS @ FRED T. FOARD  
HIBRITEN @ HICKORY  
STATESVILLE @ ALEXANDER CENTRAL

### **NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A STANDINGS**

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SOUTH CALDWELL 4-0; 8-0

HICKORY 2-1; 7-1

**WATAUGA** 2-1; 4-3

ST. STEPHENS 2-1; 6-2

HIBRITEN 1-2; 2-5

FRED T. FOARD 1-3; 3-5

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 0-4; 1-7