

Pioneers Blast Indians In Six

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 28 March 2012 09:22

Watauga High baseball coach Pete Hardee is an aficionado. He's constantly preaching the importance of playing solid fundamental baseball. Well, it looks like those lessons are paying off in a big way. The Pioneers (6-5 overall; 4-2 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) looked

well prepared Tuesday night as they routed St. Stephens 13-3 in six innings at Frye Field. The Pioneers won the game by the ten-run mercy rule (the second time they've done that this season). A seven-run second inning, highlighted by Max Linnville's two run homer (his second home run in as many games) and a two-run single by Matt Proffitt backboned the attack. "Linnville is such a hard worker," Hardee said. "He takes things to heart and really applies himself at practice. He's been one of our hottest hitters of late, and he's doing a great job setting things up for us batting lead-off."

The win also pulls WHS into a second-place tie with the Indians (8-3; 4-2); and Tuesday night's shellacking also snapped Saint's four-game winning streak.

"We have developed quite a rivalry with Watauga," said Indians coach Chip Watts. "And it's real disappointing to lose like this. Our guys just weren't ready, and Pete had his guys well prepared. They just took it to us."

And the Pioneers did it against Saint's best pitcher, Greg Lucas. The left-hander, who tossed a shutout against Fred T. Foard in his last outing (March 21), got rocked on Tuesday night. He coughed up seven runs, all earned, on five hits in just 1 2/3 innings of work. Making matters worse, Indians' pitching coughed up eight walks and hit two batters.

"You can't do that against anybody, let alone Watauga, and expect to win," Watts said. "They did a great job taking advantage of what we gave them. Greg really struggled tonight. He left a couple of pitches up and Watauga jumped on them."

Lucas (2-2) is expected to start against Alexander Central Friday night.

The Pioneers turned in their best offensive effort of the year. The top five hitters: Linnville, Ryan Turner, David Martin, Proffitt and Tyler Jones got on base 15 times. The Pioneers pounded out 12 hits and WHS also hit two home runs.

Linnville and Turner paced WHS with three hits apiece; Martin and Proffitt each had two RBI; Ethan Critcher homered (his first of the year); Clint Trivette, who was on the shelf with a hand injury, had a single, scored twice and drove in a run; and Corey Beldon had a base hit, two RBI and a pair of sacrifices.

Brian Bolster scored all the way from second base on Beldon's sacrifice bunt in the sixth, when the Indians failed to cover the plate. In all, the Pioneers had four sacrifices on the night.

"We work on bunting for at least an hour everyday in practice," Linnville said. "And tonight it really paid off. We're scoring runs off sacrifice bunts. But the team just rolled out there today, really swinging the bats well and crushed the ball."

"We have a very good lineup," Hardee said. "Our top four hitters, and you can throw Tyler in the mix as well, really hit the ball hard tonight. We beat a good team tonight playing good fundamental baseball. It was good to see."

Ethan Greene went the distance, scattered four hits and struck out seven as he picked up his third win of the year; defensively, the Pioneers only made one error and they also turned two double plays.

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WHS returns home to play Fred T. Foard Friday night. Our coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The JV team defeated St. Stephens, 2-0. The Pioneers, however, only made two hits.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A SCOREBOARD

TUESDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

WATAUGA 13, ST. STEPHENS 3 (6 INNINGS)

HIBRITEN 1, ALEXANDER CENTRAL 0

HICKORY 5, FRED T. FOARD 3

SOUTH CALDWELL - BYE

WEDNESDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

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ALEXANDER CENTRAL @ NORTH IREDELL

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE STANDINGS

SOUTH CALDWELL 6-0; 10-0 W10
WATAUGA 4-2; 6-5 W1
ST. STEPHENS 4-2; 8-3 L1
HICKORY 3-3; 8-3 W1
HIBRITEN 3-3 4-7 W1
FRED T. FOARD 1-5; 4-8 L1
ALEXANDER CENTRAL 0-6; 3-9 L2