

Pioneers, Greene Shut Down Hickory

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 04 April 2012 09:19

The Watauga High baseball team got its revenge on Hickory and losing pitcher Ryan Garlow Tuesday night at WHS Field. The Pioneers, who were handcuffed in their last meeting against Garlow on March 9 at

LP Fran Stadium in Hickory, erupted for three runs in the first inning and whipped the Red Tornadoes 5-1 on a rain-soaked night at the ball park.

Ethan Critcher, who is 5-7 with three doubles and seven runs-batted-in in his last two games, had the big blow, a two-run single that hit the mound and ricocheted into center field. Critcher was 2-3 with a double and three RBI.

"I'm just seeing the ball a lot better," Critcher said in a modest tone. "I've also lowered my expectations this year. I'm putting less pressure on myself. I'm more relaxed at the plate. Garlow is a very good left hander. He's a crafty guy, but he left one out there and I hit it hard." The win keeps WHS (8-5 overall; 6-2 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) all alone in second place in the NW3A/4A standings. The Pioneers trail South Caldwell by two games for first place. The Spartans (12-0; 8-0) defeated St. Stephens 3-2 Tuesday night on Gage Parham's walk-off RBI single in the seventh.

The Pioneers have also won four in a row in league play, and they snapped a four-game slide against Hickory. It was WHS's first win against the Red Tornadoes since 2010 at the old WHS Field.

"This was a revenge game for us," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "We're a lot better than the team that showed up against these guys at LP Fran Stadium. But Garlow is a tough pitcher. He's always tough on us. The other night, the guy lasted like one inning against St. Stephens. I can't explain it. But we jumped on him early. He got a lot stronger as the game went on." Garlow (2-3), despite the loss, struck out 13 men. In turn, winning pitcher Ethan Greene (4-1), who threw his second complete game of the year, matched Garlow pitch-for-pitch. The right hander struck out nine and scattered four hits.

"Getting that early lead really gave me a lot of confidence," Greene said. "And Garlow is a tough lefty. I knew I had to be at my best tonight. I just attacked their hitters, and I got into a groove." Greene, who surrendered a first-inning single to Garlow, retired nine in a row during one stretch. The Red Tornadoes (9-5; 3-4) finally broke through with a run in the fifth. Otherwise, Greene was in complete control.

"He was great," Hardee said. "He mixed things up real well. I was impressed with the way he attacked their hitters. He did a good job protecting the early lead we gave him. It was a great effort on Ethan's part. He really came through for us in a big game."

The Red Tornadoes, who began the season by winning seven in a row, have now lost five of their last seven games, and they've fallen into fifth place in the conference standings.

The Pioneers are scheduled to play North Davidson in a non-conference game tonight. Tripp Taylor gets the starting nod. Our coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The JV team played Hickory to a 2-2, seven inning tie.....Tuesday night's game only took an hour and 14 minutes. Ironically, the lightning delay before the game took an hour and 14 minutes.....WHS will play in the Forest City Easter Tournament next Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, April 9, 11-12. The Pioneers take on West Iredell in the opening round at 2:30

Pioneers, Greene Shut Down Hickory

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 04 April 2012 09:19

p.m.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE SCOREBOARD

TUESDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

WATAUGA 5, HICKORY 1

SOUTH CALDWELL 3, ST. STEPHENS 2

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 7, FRED T. FOARD 0

HIBRITEN - BYE

WEDNESDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

Pioneers, Greene Shut Down Hickory

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 04 April 2012 09:19

NORTH DAVIDSON @ WATUAGA

LAKE NORMAN @ ALEXANDER CENTRAL

SOUTH CALDWELL @ McDOWELL