

One Bad Apple....

Written by Mike Kelly
Thursday, 05 April 2012 00:45

And as the story goes, "doesn't spoil the whole bunch." Unfortunately, that wasn't the case Wednesday night for the Watauga High baseball team. The Pioneers (8-6 overall), thanks to seven walks, five alone in the third inning that plate three runs,

dropped a 10-9 decision to North Davidson in a non-conference game at WHS Field.

"Our pitchers for next year have to start throwing strikes," said WHS coach Pete Hardee in a firm tone. "These guys have to step up in game situations. We just gave up too many walks in the third inning, and it hurt us."

Five walks and a bunt single by Jake Roberson handed the Black Knights (7-6) three runs, and a 5-0 lead. Roberson's two-run, two-out single gave North Davidson a 2-0 lead in the first inning. The Black Knights also had five infield hits among their 14 hits.

"There's no defense against a walk," Hardee said. "We walked in three runs. That's not acceptable. You've got to throw strike."

Andrew Mayton, winning pitcher Clyde Tate and Taylor Idol all walked with the bases loaded in the third. But despite those pratfalls, the Pioneers came charging back. David Martin highlighted a three-run third inning with a two run double, and Clint Trivette's solo home run in the fourth made it 5-4.

But Chase Mitchell hit an opposite-field grand slam in the top of the fifth that gave North Davidson a 10-4 lead. WHS chipped away, and cut the lead to one at 10-9 on Trivette's two-run, two-out single in the bottom of the seventh. Trivette took second on the play, thanks to Roberson's error in left field. But Drew Beaver, who picked up his second save against WHS this season, got Ethan Greene on a called third strike to end the game.

"We had a chance, but we couldn't do it," Hardee said. "You've got to swing the bat in that situation."

Trivette paced WHS with a home run and three runs-batted-in; Martin was 3-4 with a double and two RBI; Tyler Jones had two hits, including a double and drove in two runs. Mitchell drove in four runs for the Black Knights; Roberson and Mayton drove in two runs apiece. Tate (5-1) got the win, despite laboring through his performance. He went six innings, he gave up three earned runs with six strikeouts. He walked two men and he hit two batters.

Tripp Taylor (1-1) got the start and suffered his first loss of the year. The left hander, who coughed up five earned runs, faced two batters in the third before he got the hook. Taylor Shuford came on in relief and really struggled at times.

The Pioneers will take the holiday weekend off, then it's off to Forest City, N.C., to play in the East Rutherford Easter Tournament. The Pioneers will play West Iredell in the opening round Monday afternoon at 2:30 p.m.

"They're suppose to have a good left hander," Hardee said. "They don't score a lot of runs. I would like to have a better start in this tournament than last year. You lose that first game, you're basically just playing out the string."

The Pioneers lost to Chase in the first round last season and finished fifth. Our coverage Monday afternoon begins at 2 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The JV team played its second tie in as many night. They tied North Davidson 7-7 in six innings.....North Davidson swept the season series against the Pioneers.

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NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE BASEBALL

WEDNESDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

NORTH DAVIDSON 10, WATAUGA 9

McDOWELL 5, SOUTH CALDWELL 2

LAKE NORMAN 2, ALEXANDER CENTRAL 0

THURSDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

HICKORY @ ALEXANDER CENTRAL

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**FRED T. FOARD @ SOUTH CALDWELL
HIBRITEN @ ST. STEPHENS
WATAUGA - BYE**

Photo Courtesy: David Martin Celebrates, by Bill Sheffield