

## Pioneers Fall Short

Written by Mike Kelly  
Tuesday, 10 April 2012 07:38

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It just wasn't meant to be. No matter what you do in life some times, things just don't go your way. Well, that was the story Monday afternoon as the Watauga High baseball team suffered its second one-run loss in

five days. A two-run single by Sam Marshall of West Iredell (9-4) in the top of the seventh inning snapped a scoreless tie and handed the Warriors a 2-1 win in the opening-round of the East Rutherford Easter Tournament at McNair Field in Forest City, N.C.

And for the second game in a row, the Pioneers (8-7) left the tying run in scoring position. Winning pitcher Sean Grant (5-1) struck out Ryan Turner to end the game.

"We really didn't hit it well today," said WHS third baseman Ethan Critcher. "(Grant) kept us off balance with his off-speed stuff, but I really felt we should have caught up with him sooner."

The loss drops WHS into the consolation round,. The Pioneers will play Team Carolina (3-7) Tuesday afternoon at 2:30 p.m. East Rutherford defeated Team Carolina 4-0 Monday night in the final game of the opening round. It's a rematch between the teams. The Pioneers defeated Team Carolina 15-5 in five innings in the fifth-place game last season. West Iredell takes on East Rutherford in the semifinal round tonight at 7:30 p.m.

Unfortunately, the Pioneers, who had scored 42 runs in their last four games, were held to just three hits on Monday. Matt Proffitt had two of WHS's hits. He broke up Grant's no-hit bid with one-out single in the fourth. He advanced to third on Chantan Goodin's error in right field. And he nearly scored the first run of the game moments later. But he was cut down at the plate on Tyler Jones' bunt attempt.

Grant, who came off the mound, made a perfect throw on the play to cut down Proffitt, who was racing down the line from third.

"And that's the make up of our team," said West Iredell coach Randy Martin. "We're a very good defensive team. And on that bunt play, our third baseman (Dwayne Williams) kept yelling 'four, four,' so Sean knew he had a play at the plate. And it was important to keep Watauga off the board. The last thing we wanted was to come from behind on this team. That would have taken away our aggressiveness."

And Martin showed off his aggressive attitude in the seventh inning. With two outs, losing pitcher Ethan Greene (4-2) hit the ninth-place hitter, Josh Lamberth, to keep the inning alive. Brent Pope slapped a single into right field on the very next play. Martin gambled and sent Lamberth, who doesn't have blazing speed, to third. A good throw would have cut him down. But Jones' throw handcuffed Critcher allowing Lamberth to reach safely. Pope took second on the play. Marshall delivered moments later with his two-run single that gave the Warriors a 2-0 lead.

"(Lamberth) would have probably been out by about ten yards if the throw is perfect," Martin said. "We weren't generating much offense, but that's our game. Put pressure on people, and force them to make the perfect play. We were fortunate right there. (Jones) makes the perfect throw right there, (Lamberth) is out and it's a whole different ball game."

Greene, who deserved a better fate, suffered his second loss of the year. The right hander went 6 2/3 innings and gave up two earned runs on six hits; he struck out eight, walked four and hit a batter.

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"Greenie threw a heck of a game, that's for sure," Critcher said. "We just didn't hit the ball, and we didn't make the plays behind him."

The Pioneers, thanks to a one-out walk to Clint Trivette and a double by Corey Belden down the right-field line, put runners on second and third against Grant in the bottom of the seventh. Max Linnville drove in WHS's only run of the day, with a sharp grounder to second base. But Grant regrouped and got Turner to end the game.

Grant struck out six, walked four and scattered three hits in picking up the win. Our coverage of today's game begins at 2 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

## **EAST RUTHERORDEASTER TOURNAMENT**

**(at McNair Field, Forest City)**

### **Monday's results**

Game 1: Alexander Central 4, Chase 3

**Game 2: W. Iredell 2, Watauga 1**

Game 3: S. Caldwell 10, R-S Central 0, 5 inn.

Game 4: E. Rutherford 4, Team Carolina 0

### **Tuesday's games**

Game 5: Chase vs. R-S Central, noon

**Game 6: Watauga vs. E. Rutherford-Asheville loser, 2:30 p.m.**

Game 7: Alexander Central vs. S. Caldwell, semifinal, 5 p.m.

Game 8: W. Iredell vs. E. Rutherford-Asheville winner, semifinal, 7:30 p.m.

## **22ND ANNUAL CATAWBA COUNTYEASTER BASEBALL CLASSIC**

**(at Catawba County Fairgrounds, Newton)**

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### Monday's results

Game 1: No. 2 Hickory 6, No. 7 Fred T. Foard 5, 8 inn.

Game 2: No. 6 W. Caldwell 12, No. 3 Bunker Hill 5

Game 3: No. 1 S. Iredell 12, No. 8 Newton-Conover 6

Game 4: No. 5 Maiden 6, No. 4 St. Stephens 4

### Tuesday's games

Game 5: No. 7 Fred T. Foard (4-12) vs. No. 3 Bunker Hill (11-6), noon

Game 6: No. 8 Newton-Conover (2-11) vs. No. 4 St. Stephens (8-6), 2:30 p.m.

Game 7: No. 2 Hickory (10-5) vs. No. 6 W. Caldwell (6-8), semifinal, 5 p.m.

Game 8: No. 1 S. Iredell (9-4) vs. No. 5 Maiden (9-6), semifinal, 7:30 p.m.