

Spartans Eliminate Pioneers

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 02 May 2012 08:55

The Watauga High softball team suffered a disappointing loss Tuesday at the Sports Complex in the opening-round of the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference Tournament. The Pioneers, the No.4 seed, were victimized by South Caldwell, the No.5 seed, 7-4. Rebecca Kale's two-run homer in the

fifth inning snapped a 2-2 tie and sent the Spartans (11-10) on their way. Lauren Silvers added some insurance with a two-run single in the sixth that put the contest out of reach.

It's the second time in as many years that the Spartans have derailed the Pioneers (9-11) in post-season play. South Caldwell eliminated WHS in the opening-round of the state playoffs last season.

"It's frustrating, that's for sure," said WHS junior Taylor Drummonds. "They beat us last year in the playoffs, and they did it again this year. They put that crazy shift on us, and yeah, it bothered us. They kept the ball outside on us and we couldn't pull anything."

The Spartans utilized a five-man infield, with the center fielder playing right behind second base. The outfielders were stationed in the power alleys in right-and-left center fields.

"It's something we just started working on last week in practice," said South Caldwell coach Moira Brookshire. "Our pitcher (Makay Carver) had to keep the ball outside. And she did a good job of that for the most part. Watauga has a good team. They beat us twice this season, and we decided to come up with something new. We had nothing to lose. And it worked to our advantage."

Carver and Madison Bumgarner (a relative of San Francisco Giants pitcher Madison Bumgarner, who picked up the win in relief) combined on a two hitter. But the Spartans coughed up seven walks. Unfortunately, the Pioneers left eight runners on base, four in scoring position.

"It's tough beating a team three times in a season," said WHS coach Stephanie Long. "I didn't see the hunger in our eyes. (South Caldwell) took this game away from us. Give them credit. They were the more determined team today and they won the game."

Michala McCune, who had an run-scoring double in the third, and Nicole Dollar, who had a two-run single in the seventh, had the only WHS hits. Riley Pudney, who coughed up Kale's home-run ball, suffered the loss in relief.

The win moves South Caldwell into the semifinal round against the top seed, Alexander Central, in Taylorsville Thursday night.

"Hopefully, (South Caldwell) doesn't win the tournament," Drummonds said. "If they do, we won't even make the state playoffs. We've just have to regroup, and we have a week to do it."

The state playoffs in softball begin next Friday, May 11.

NOTES: Kim Robinson missed her second consecutive game. The WHS junior is attending a DECA Seminar in Salt Lake City, UT. DECA prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in marketing, financing, hospitality and management at the high school and collegiate levels around the globe. Robinson will rejoin the team for WHS state playoff opener on May 11.

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TUESDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

SOUTH CALDWELL 7, WATAUGA 4

FRED T. FOARD 14, HICKORY 2 (5 INNINGS)

ST. STEPHENS 9, HIBRITEN 7

ALEXANDER CENTRAL - BYE

THURSDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS

TAYLORSVILLE, N.C.

SOUTH CALDWELL v. ALEXANDER CENTRAL, 4:30 P.M.

ST. STEPHENS v. FRED T. FOARD, 7 P.M.

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FRIDAY NIGHT'S GAMES

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME, 7 P.M.