

Pioneers Stave Off Huskies, 43-32

Written by Mike Kelly

Thursday, 10 January 2013 09:19

There are those days where you do whatever it takes to get the job done. Well, the Watauga High boys basketball team did just that Wednesday night. The Pioneers (6-4), despite some anxious

moments, hung on to beat Ashe County 43-32 in a non-conference game at the Dog Pound in West Jefferson, N.C.

The win snapped a two-game losing streak, and the Pioneers also won their first game in West Jefferson in seven years (the last time WHS won in West Jefferson was in 2005). The Pioneers, who led 19-18 at halftime and 28-27 after three, finally put the game away in the fourth quarter. WHS methodically pulled away thanks to senior Tyler Sturgill, who came off the bench and gave the Pioneers a much needed spark. Sturgill, who scored six points in the final stanza, finished with 12 points and six rebounds. That effort allowed WHS to build its biggest lead of the game at 42-30 with less than a minute to play in the game. The Huskies (4-10) never got any closer than ten points the rest of the way.

"Tyler and I had a conversation before the season even started, and I told him he needed to be more aggressive and more assertive on the boards," said WHS coach Rob Sanders. "And he took that conversation and ran with it. He's been so much more aggressive and physical for us inside."

DeWayne Mackey was the only other player in double figures for WHS. He finished with 11 points, three steals and five assists.

"It's tough to play here," Sanders said. "And our energy level to start the game wasn't very good. We made a lot of mistakes and kept turning the ball over. And Ashe County played a heck of a lot harder than they did against us the first time we played them (on November 30 in Boone). And anytime you come into a building like this against a team that believes it can win, and plays that hard, you're in for a battle all night long."

But the Pioneers picked up their defensive intensity in the second half. The Pioneers held Ashe County to just 14 points in the second half, including five points in the fourth quarter. A bucket by Jonathan Cox of the Huskies with 7:36 to play in the fourth quarter made it 30-29 WHS. But the Pioneers gradually pulled away from there.

"It's so evident how much this team knows how to play basketball and how to win," Sanders said. "Before the game, if you hear them talk, they say all the right things. They know how to win, they know what to do. It's just a case of being focused on the floor and holding yourself and your teammates accountable. And when you do those things, good things happen."

Jordan Spell led the Huskies with eight points. Cullen Ashley and Matthew Lee each had six points apiece.

The Pioneers return to Northwestern 3A/4A Conference play Friday night in Taylorsville against Alexander Central. The Cougars are reeling right now. They're currently 0-3 in league play and in last place.

Coverage of Friday's double-header begins at 6 p.m. on AM 1450, WATA.

NOTES: The WHS JV girls defeated Ashe County, 39-28. Madi Brown led WHS (6-5) with 13 points; the WHS JV boys (9-2) defeated Ashe County, 58-51. Aaron Dobbins had 14 points and ten rebounds; T.J. Poulos had 14 points, eight steals, ten assists; Utah Jones had 11 points and

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seven boards; Michael Ebaugh had eight rebounds.

WHS 43, ASHE COUNTY 32

WHS: STURGILL 12 (6 REBOUNDS), AUGUSTINE 2, MARGOLIS 5 (3 STEALS), KOPPENHAVER 5, BAKER 5 (6 REBOUNDS), MACKEY 11 (3 STEALS, 5 ASSISTS), LAMBERT 3. FG: 13, 3FG: 2, FT: 11-21.
THREE-POINTERS: MARGOLIS, BAKER.

ASHE COUNTY: LAWS 2, S. SHEETS 3, SPELL 8, COX 4, ASHLEY 6, GAMBILL 3, LEET 6.
FG: 9, 3FG: 2, 8-21.
THREE-POINTERS: SPELL 2.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY'S GAMES

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GIRLS:

WATAUGA 56, ASHE COUNTY 25

ST. STEPHENS 49, STATESVILLE 39

BOYS:

WATAUGA 43, ASHE COUNTY 32

STATESVILLE 80, ST. STEPHENS 44

TUESDAY'S GAMES

GIRLS:

CORRECTION: HIBRITEN 52, ST. STEPHENS 48