

Harrill Guns Down Spartans

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 09 February 2013 12:12

Jay Harrill isn't one to over step his boundries. Instead, the Watauga High junior has a wait-and-see attitude. And for the most part, his patience has paid off this season. And in turn, it's been a added bonus for the Pioneers.

Harrill, who has been a huge asset for the Pioneers off the bench this season, worked his magic once again Friday night. Harrill finished with a team-high 18 points as the Pioneers rallied to beat South Caldwell 70-66 in overtime at Lentz-Eggers Gym. The win also moves WHS (11-8 overall; 5-5 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) into sole possession of fourth place in the NW3A/4A standings. And the win also give WHS a sweep of the season series between the teams.

And 15 of those 18 points came in the final 4:13 of the game. Trailing 54-49 with 13.4 seconds left, Harrill caught fire. He buried a three that made it 54-52 with 3.5 seconds left, and following a time out, Harrill stole the inbounds pass from Lance Minton and hit the game-tying shot at the horn as he was falling backwards.

"I couldn't remember if we were down by three points or two," he said. "It all happened so fast. I saw Cameron (Baker) open behind the three-point line, but someone tugged at my arm and I thought I was being fouled. So I just threw up the shot and it went in."

"When Jay made that steal, I was going to call a time out. I'm glad I didn't when I saw it was going in," said WHS coach Rob Sanders, who made a third base slide in front of his bench as Harrill buried his game-saving shot. "Jay is a pure shooter, and when he's on, you can't shut him off. He really picked us up tonight."

Harrill continued his hot pace as he tossed in ten points in the overtime period. He buried a three-ball to start the extra session that gave WHS a 57-54 lead; and his trifecta with less than a minute to go put the Pioneers on top to stay, 66-64. He made four consecutive free throws down the stretch to ice the game away.'

"We knew this was a big game coming in," Harrill said. "And we knew we had to win, if we wanted to get the top seed in the state playoffs (among the Class 4A schools in the conference), and a home game in the first round of the conference tournament."

But stepping up in the clutch is nothing new for Harrill. He had a marvelous game off the bench in that eight overtime affair against St. Stephens (January 22) and he poured in 17 points coming off the bench against Fred T. Foard (January 30).

"It was the Jay Harrill show from the time he hit that game-tying shot," Sanders said. "Anytime he gets hot, you can't lose him on the floor. I knew with (Ben) Margolis in foul trouble, we were going to need Jay to step up. When I took him out in the fourth quarter, I told him to be ready because I didn't know how long Margolis was going to last. He fouled out, and Jay hit the floor running and ready."

The Pioneers, who trailed the majority of the game, finally took the lead with a ten-point run in the third quarter. The Pioneers also produced seven steals during that stretch. But leading 46-37 midway through the final stanza, the offense went cold. In turn, the Spartans (7-12; 5-6) outscored WHS 15-3 to take a five-point lead, setting the stage for Harrill's heroic finish.

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"It's been a long, tough road for this group," Sanders said. "It's a deserving win. They fought hard all night, and never gave up on themselves. But we have to stop going through these offensive lulls. We built that nine point lead with our defensive pressure. But then we stopped scoring. We had good looks, but we couldn't find the hole. We had two, three, four footers. We just couldn't put it in. We couldn't finish. But we showed a lot of character and came back from five down to win the game when a lot of people thought it was over."

DeWayne Mackey had 14 points, eight assists and five steals for WHS; Margolis, who fouled out with 2:39 left in the overtime period, finished with 10 points and seven rebounds. Collin Augustine, who fouled out with 13 seconds left in the fourth quarter, had six points and seven board.

Jared Mask led the Spartans with 22 points; Jordyn Probst had 20 points. Minton finished with ten points.

"We know we're going to see each other again in the conference tournament," Sanders said. "It just a matter of home court advantage. But it's tough to beat a team three times in one season. But any advantage you can get is huge. And getting a home game against these guys in the conference tournament is big."

The Pioneers will play their final home game of the regular season Tuesday night against Hibriten at Lentz-Eggers Gym. It will also be Senior Night, and Pack the Pantry Night. Coverage begins at 6 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The Spartans haven't won in Boone since the 2003-04 season....The WHS JV boys defeated South Caldwell, 67-32. Aaron Dobbins had ten points to pace WHS; Levi Wilcox had nine points; Utah Jones had eight points.....The WHS varsity team has played five overtime games this season. The Pioneers are 2-3 in those games.

WATAUGA 70, SOUTH CALDWELL 66 (OT)

Score By Period 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 1OT Total

South Caldwell 16 12 9 17 12 - 66

Watauga 9 18 13 14 16 - 70

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SCHS: SMITH 2, BARKER 7, MINTON 10, WAKEFIELD 3, PROBST 20, MASK 22, EGGERS 2. FG: 18, 3FG: 2, FT: 24-28.
THREE-POINTERS: WAKEFIELD, PROBST.

WHS: HARRILL 18, STURGILL 2, GAILES 5 (5 ASSISTS), AUGUSTINE 6 (7 REBOUNDS), MARGOLIS 10 (7 REBOUNDS), KOPPENHAVER 5, BAKER 3, HOWSER 5 (4 ASSISTS), MACKEY 14 (8 ASSISTS, 5 STEALS), LAMBERT 2. FG: 18, 3FG: 8, FT: 10-13.
THREE-POINTERS: HARRILL 4, MARGOLIS 2, MACKEY, GAILES.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE

FRIDAY'S GAMES

GIRLS:

WATAUGA 43, SOUTH CALDWELL 30
HICKORY 83, HIBRITEN 39
FRED T. FOARD 74, ST. STEPHENS 61
ALEXANDER CENTRAL - BYE

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BOYS:

WATAUGA 70, SOUTH CALDWELL 66 (OT)

HICKORY 78, HIBRITEN 47

ST. STEPHENS 67, FRED T. FOARD 47

ALEXANDER CENTRAL - BYE

NW3A/4A STANDINGS

GIRLS:

FRED T. FOARD 10-1; 17-6

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 8-2; 19-3

HICKORY 8-2; 20-2

HIBRITEN 4-6; 8-13

WATAUGA 3-7; 8-12

SOUTH CALDWELL 3-8; 6-13

ST. STEPHENS 0-10; 3-18

BOYS:

FRED T. FOARD 9-2; 19-4

HICKORY 8-2; 18-4

ST. STEPHENS 8-2; 17-5

WATAUGA 5-5; 11-8

SOUTH CALDWELL 5-6; 7-12

HIBRITEN 1-9; 8-13

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 0-10; 7-15