

Indians Stave Off Pioneers, 7-5

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 27 March 2013 08:04

The Watauga High baseball team could probably write a novel on frustration and disappointment this season. The Pioneers (2-8 overall; 1-5 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) suffered another tough loss Tuesday night. A two out, run-scoring double by Greg Lucas in the fifth inning snapped a 5-5 tie, and a two out, RBI single by Konner Klingenberg in the sixth handed St. Stephens a 7-5 win at Frye Field. A two-out RBI single by Kyrawn Whitfield in the fourth tied the game at 5-5. The win also snapped a five-game losing streak against the Pioneers, who have lost three in a row and five of their last six games.

"Anytime you play Watauga, you know you're going up against a well coached team," said St. Stephens coach Chip Watts. "We can't seem to score enough runs against these guys. But today, I challenged our guys, and they came through with some clutch hits."

Winning pitcher Tyler Jack (3-1), despite some shakey moments, picked up the win. The left hander walked six and hit two batters. But he struck out seven and he carried the Indians into the seventh inning.

"Tyler has had his problems with walks this season," Watts said. "But he carried us. He battled through his control problems and found a way. It was a good team effort, and a huge win for us."

The win moves St. Stephens (6-3; 3-3) into a two-way tie for third place with Hickory. The Red Tornadoes defeated Fred T. Foard, 4-0.

Chance Richards (0-2), who really deserved a better fate, suffered the loss. The right hander went 5.1 innings and coughed up seven runs, but only three were earned. The Pioneers made three critical errors behind him in the first two innings. Those miscues handed the Indians a 4-2 lead.

A pair of walks, an error and an RBI double by Mason Illich gave WHS a 2-0 lead in the top of the first inning. But that lead evaporated in the bottom of the first. Back-to-back singles by Kyrawn Whitfield and Dylan Brown to start the inning put runners at first and second with nobody out. An error by Utah Jones at third loaded the bases. A fielder's choice RBI by J.C. Moebius and a sacrifice fly by Dylan Beiland tied the game.

The Indians jumped on top with two more unearned runs in the bottom of the second. An error by second baseman Carson Isaacs, and center fielder Tyler Jones on a throw to the plate, fueled a two-run rally by the Indians. Alex Teague, who was batting ninth and was 2-3 on the day, had an RBI single that made it, 3-2; a sacrifice fly by Brown gave the Indians a 4-2 lead. The Pioneers tied it with two runs in fourth, thanks to Jack's generosity. He walked two men, he hit two batters, including Tyler Jones with the bases loaded that force in a run. A sacrifice fly by Ryder Jones tied the game at 4-4. WHS only made one hit in the inning, a single by Anthony Raymonds. WHS only made five hits on the day.

WHS grabbed the lead with a run in the top of the fifth. Isaacs led off with a single and moved to third on a pair of wild pitches. He scored the go-head run on Andy Critcher's sacrifice fly for a 5-4 lead. It was Critcher's first RBI of the season. But the Pioneers couldn't make the lead stand up.

"We're really struggling right now," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "But I'm not giving up. There's still a lot of games left on the schedule. We've got to work our way out of this."

The Pioneers got the tying runs on base in the seventh with one out, but Tyler Sturgill, who reached on an error to start the inning, was cut down at third as he tried to advance on a pitch in the dirt. That play squelched the rally as Moebius, who picked up the save in relief, retired Utah

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Jones and Critcher on a pair of ground ball outs to end the game.

The Pioneers are scheduled to play Fred T. Foard on Thursday at Pioneer Field. Coverage, if they play, begins at 6 p.m., on Classic Hits 100.7 FM.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE

TUESDAY'S GAMES

ST. STEPHENS 7, WATAUGA 5

HICKORY 4, FRED T. FOARD 0

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 1, HIBRITEN 0

McDOWELL 1, SOUTH CALDWELL 0

WEDNESDAY'S GAMES

ALEXANDER CENTRAL @ LAKE NORMAN

HICKORY @ NORTH LINCOLN

THURSDAY'S GAMES

FRED T. FOARD @ WATAUGA

PATTON @ HICKORY

ST. STEPHENS @ ALEXANDER CENTRAL

HIBRITEN @ SOUTH CALDWELL

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE STANDINGS

SOUTH CALDWELL 5-1; 6-3

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 5-1; 10-1

ST. STEPHENS 3-3; 6-3

HICKORY 3-3; 7-4

FRED T. FOARD 2-4; 5-6

HIBRITEN 2-4; 4-5

WATAUGA 1-5; 2-8