

## Cougars Advance To Western Finals

Written by Mike Kelly

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There will be a new state champion this season. The Alexander Central High softball team saw to that by knocking off defending Class 4A champion, Indian Trail-Porter Ridge, on Wednesday night. The Cougars wiped out a 2-0, first-inning deficit and clobbered the Pirates 10-2 in the North Carolina High School Athletic Association western semifinals.

Lead-off hitter Taylor Wike paced the Cougars (29-1) with a double, a home run and two runs-batted-in. The Cougars, who pounded out ten hits, broke th game open with five runs in the sixth.

Bailey Rhoney was 2-3 with two RBI; Amanda Sports drove in a pair of runs. The Cougars also made four errors, but winning pitcher Kiana Millsaps worked her way through it by going the distance. She gave up an earned run on three hits with three strikeouts. Whitney Haywood had two of Porter Ridge's (16-7) three hits.

The Cougars will play Southeast Guilford (25-2) in the western finals. The best of three series begins tonight in Taylorsville at 6 p.m. Southeast Guilford, the No.1 seed from the Metro 4A Conference, advanced by knocking off North Davidson 6-4 Tuesday night.

Hickory (17-10) takes on Weddington on the road tonight in the opening round of the NCHSAA Class 3A western finals. The Red Tornadoes have won four in a row. Game two will be played at Hickory Friday night.

The St. Stephens girl's soccer team (21-3-2) takes on Raleigh-Cardinal Gibbons (21-2-1)

Saturday in the NCHSAA Class 3A state championship game Saturday in Raleigh at 11 a.m.

Former Watauga High soccer coach Doug Kidd will be shooting for his third state championship in five years on Saturday as Swansboro (21-5-1) takes on South Iredell (22-2) in the Class 2A state title game at 2 p.m.

Kidd led Swansboro to state titles in 2009 and 2010.