

Williams Joins Tigers

Written by Staff Reports
Saturday, 06 July 2013 10:22

Matt Williams will play at his third school in as many years. Williams, who led the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference in passing last fall, will join Fred T. Foard this season. Williams was the starting quarterback at St. Stephens his freshman year and led that team to the state playoffs for the first time in three years. Last year, Williams

guided Hickory to an 8-5 record and to the second round of the state playoffs.

According to Williams' father, Scott, the family has moved into the Fred T. Foard community and his son has enrolled at Foard and will play varsity football there this season. Ironically, Williams will also be teamed up with Tom Harper, who he played for last fall at Hickory.

Harper left Hickory last spring to become the new football coach at Foard. Harper replaced Watauga County native Jason Phelps, who stepped down after two years as head football coach (Phelps was 5-15 with the Tigers). Williams led the NW3A/4A Conference in passing with (unofficially) 1,588 yards with 12 TDs by completing 55.3 percent of his passes. He also ran 182 times for 655 yards and 10 touchdowns, helping Hickory go 4-2 in the Northwestern 3A-4A and tie Hibriten and Alexander Central for third. Hickory finished 8-5 overall.

Foard went 0-6 in the NW3A/4A last year and 2-8 overall. Sophomores Jacob Schmidt and Jackson Bass were the Tigers' primary quarterbacks last season. They combined to throw for 617 yards and five TDs. Foard and Hickory will face each other on Oct. 25 at Barger Stadium in Hickory. Harper and Williams will make their Tigers' debuts on Aug. 23 at home against Maiden. Williams, who threw for an average of 121 yards a game last season, had his best statistical game in the regular season finale, completing 14 of 18 passes for 205 yards and four TDs and rushing four times for 31 yards and a score in a 63-0 victory over Foard. After two seasons and 25 varsity games, Williams unofficially is 196 of 377 for 2,674 yards passing with 16 TDs and 20 interceptions and has rushed 269 times for 1,003 yards and 13 TDs.

And with Williams leaving Hickory, new head coach Mike Helms could have only one underclassman on his 2013 roster who has thrown a pass last season in a varsity game – Ben Ansley completed one for 10 yards against Statesville in the 2012 season opener. Raheim Connelly, a senior last season, had the other three HHS completions (for 10 yards) not thrown by Williams.

Williams is also the first star player in the Greater Hickory area to change schools since the NCHSAA revamped its eligibility rules. Under those rules, any student-athlete whose family makes a bonafide move into a school community is eligible for athletics (no change from previous rules). The most significant shift in the NCHSAA rules is student-athletes who transfer without moving into a school district must sit out of athletics for 365 days before regaining eligibility.

The NCHSAA did include a clause that will allow local education districts (LEAs) to set their own transfer policies.

Fred T. Foard athletic director Rob Bliss said his understanding of the application of the rules means a student-athlete in the Catawba County Schools, for instance, can transfer to another school in that system. If the family does not move into the school's community, the move would take CCS board approval before the student-athlete would be eligible for athletics.

The big change is student-athletes who attend Catawba County Schools and Hickory Public

Williams Joins Tigers

Written by Staff Reports
Saturday, 06 July 2013 10:22

Schools and Newton-Conover City Schools – and vice versa – can't transfer and be eligible for athletics without moving into the correct district.