

The Watauga High football team has made strides under first-year coach Ryan Habich. WHS (6-0 overall; 2-0 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) is off to its best start since 2006. And the Pioneers find

themselves in a first-place showdown with Freedom Friday night at Jack Groce Stadium.

And for their efforts, the Pioneers are among team receiving honorable mention recognition in the NCPreps.com Class 4A Baker's Dozen State Football Poll. The Pioneers received three votes to be ranked in this week's poll. Charlotte-Mallard Creek (6-0) is No.1 in that poll. The Mavericks also received seven-first place votes.

Scotland County (6-0), East Forsyth (6-0), Corneilus-Hough (6-0), and Greensboro Dudley (5-0) round out the top five. Former WHS coach Adrian Snow had West Forsyth in the top ten. The Titans (6-1) are tied for seventh this week with Richmond County (5-1). The Titans play R.J. Reynolds this week.

Friday night's match up between the Pioneers and Freedom is the first meeting between the schools since 2008. The Patriots (5-1) own a 28-7-1 lead in the series, but the Pioneers have won two of the last three games. WHS' 14-7 win in 2006 snapped a 22-year drought against the Patriots; their 27-8 win in 2007 was WHS' first road win against the Patriots in Morganton.

Coverage begins at 6:30 p.m. on AM 1450, WATA and GoBlueridge.net. Hibriten (6-0) is among team's receiving votes in the Class 3A poll. The Panthers play at WHS next Friday night.

2013 NCPreps.com Baker's Dozen - Week 8

Class 4A

1. Mallard Creek (7) 6-0 - 91

2. Scotland County 6-0 - 84

Pioneers Ranked By NCPreps.com

Written by Mike Kelly

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3. East Forsyth 6-0 - 75

4. Hough 6-0 - 70

5. Dudley 5-0 - 61

6. Butler 5-2 - 49

7. West Forsyth 6-1 - 44

7. Richmond County 5-1 - 44

9. Wake Forest 6-0 - 34

10. West Meck 5-1 - 22

11. Mount Tabor 5-2 - 18

12. North Davidson 5-1 - 16

13. Pinecrest 6-0 - 6

13. New Bern 5-2 - 6

HONORABLE MENTION: Charlotte Catholic (4-2) - 5; Wakefield (6-0) - 5; **Watauga (6-0) - 3**; Panther Creek (5-1) - 2; DH Conley (5-1) - 1; South View (6-1) - 1; NW Guilford (5-1) - 1;