

## Panthers Rally Past Pioneers

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 15 January 2014 09:53

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Never awaken a sleeping giant. The Watauga High girl's basketball team found that out the hard way Tuesday night in a 61-47 loss against Patton in Morganton, N.C.

Sophomore Lindsey Adams of the Panthers, who was saddled with foul trouble in the first half, awoke from her deep slumber and erupted for 19 second-half points as the Panthers wiped out a nine-point, third-quarter deficit. Trailing 34-25 with 5:39 left in the third period, the Panthers went on a 17-3 run and grabbed a 41-37 lead with 19 seconds left in the stanza.

Adams ignited the run by scoring ten points during that stretch.

"I'm disappointed with the loss," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "But what really bothers me is that we were outplayed in the second half. (Patton) just played harder than us, especially in the latter stage of the third quarter and to start the fourth quarter. We went into a lull and they just took it away from us."

The Pioneers (5-10 overall; 3-2 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) never got any closer than 42-41 on a bucket by Ryan Loflin with 6:11 left to play. But the Panthers (6-8; 2-3) put together a 9-2 run and opened up a ten-point lead at 53-43 with 3:34 to go. A three ball by Taylor Chapman, a trey by Adams and a trifecta by Malarie Tallent ignited that backbreaking run.

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The loss drops WHS into a third-place tie with South Caldwell in the NW3A/4A Conference standings; the Panthers, who are tied with St. Stephens for fifth place, are just one game out of third.

"We did things in the first half that we've been trying to do all year," Anderson said. "We established our post play. Now we didn't score a lot of points, but we were getting production in there. I was real pleased with our performance, especially on defense. We mixed up our zone, and we really made (Adams) uncomfortable. But to their credit, (Patton) stayed with their game plan and they just made more shots in the second half than we did."

The Pioneers led for the majority of the first half. An 8-0 run just before halftime gave WHS a 25-16 lead with 51 seconds left in the second quarter. But the Panthers chipped away and cut the lead to four at the break.

"We did not do a good enough job as a team in the second half," Anderson said. "Everyone knows who our best player is, it's Savanna (Wood). But she can't do it all by herself. We just couldn't get it clicking offensively. I'm proud of our effort, but Lindsay Adams just lifted her team. She made some big shots, and they found her on the offensive end. It's a tough loss, and it doesn't get any easier."

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The Pioneers have a tough stretch coming up as the Pioneers play Hickory (Friday), South Caldwell (next Tuesday) and St. Stephens (next Friday) in their next three games.

"We just have to focus on the next one, and that's Hickory," Anderson said. "We can't be in awe of them. We just have to come out, limit our turnovers, and play our game. That's all we can do right now."

Wood led the Pioneers with 15 points; Loflin, who fouled out with 22 seconds left in the game, finished with 12 points; Brooklin Carroll had seven. Chapman and Tallent had ten points apiece for the Panthers.

The Pioneers return home to play Hickory Friday night. The Red Tornadoes (12-0; 5-0), who defeated Fred T. Foard 84-27 Tuesday night, are currently sitting in first place with a one-game lead on second-place Freedom. Coverage begins at 6:05 p.m. on AM 1450, WATA and GoBlueridge.net.

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### PATTON 61, WATAUGA 47

#### SCORE BY PERIODS 1 2 3 4 TOTAL

WATAUGA HIGH 9 17 13 8 - 47

PATTON HIGH 9 13 19 20 - 61

**WHS:** WOOD 15, JERRICK 4, CARROLL 7, LOFLIN 12, McNEILL 4, BROWN 2, STAPLETON 2, JONES 1. FG: 15, 3FG: 2, FT: 11-19.

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**PATTON:** BAUER 2, TALLENT 10, LeCROY 2, ROOKS 5, PUTNAM 4, CHAPMAN 10, LYNN 2, ADAMS 19, HALL 7. FG: 15, 3FG: 6, FT: 13-25.

**WHS BOYS 59, PATTON 53**

The Watuaga High boy's basketball team picked up a huge win on the road Tuesday night. The Pioneers (11-4 overall; 2-3 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) knocked off Patton 59-53 in Morganton, N.C.

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The win moves WHS back into contention in the NW3A/4A Conference race. The Pioneers find themselves in a three-way tie with Hibriten and Fred T. Foard for fourth place, just one game out of second place. The loss leaves Patton (9-4; 3-2) in a three-way tie for second place with Hickory and St. Stephens.

"I believe it's going to be like this all year," WHS coach Rob Sanders said in an exhausted tone. "This league is so balanced. Anyone is capable of beating anybody on any given night. That's why you need to be prepared every time you take the floor in this league. If you're not, you're in for a long night."

The Pioneers were certainly prepared Tuesday night. After falling behind 2-0 and 4-3 early in the game, the Pioneers, thanks to Cameron Baker and Jay Harrill, put together an 8-0 run and led 11-4. The Pioneers never trailed again.

But the Pioneers had their anxious moments. They built an 11-point lead (their largest margin of the game) in the second quarter only to see the Panthers trim that lead to five points at the intermission.

"I told the guys at halftime, 'look at Michael Ebaugh,'" Sanders said. "He's seen limited time this year, but when we got in foul trouble, he came in and he was all over the floor, diving after loose

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balls, taking a charge, grabbing rebounds. He poured his heart out in the first half. If it wasn't for him, we wouldn't have had that halftime lead."

The Pioneers got into foul trouble, aiding Patton's comeback bid. Baker, Harrill and Matt Lambert were all planted on the bench with two fouls apiece in the second quarter when the Panthers made their run late in the first half. But those strong rallies by the Panthers became the norm for the rest of the game.

The Panthers got within three late in the third quarter at 39-36, and they crept within two at 48-46 with 5:32 left in the game. But the Pioneers staved them off with a pair of runs.

WHS closed out the third quarter with a 7-0 run for a 46-36 lead going into the final stanza. Baker paced that run by scoring five points. The Pioneers followed that up with a six-point run following a time out in the fourth quarter that gave them a 54-46 lead with less than 2:30 to play. Lambert capped off the run with a stick back underneath.

"We knew (Patton) were going to come at us with pressure," Sanders said. "We made some big turnovers and we didn't rebound the basketball well. It was just a simple case of making better decisions. I told them, 'play like you have a lead.' We just had to make the easy pass, create the easy shot. But we started forcing things, and it played right into their hands."

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"We started playing not to lose," said WHS junior Utah Jones. "We started watching the clock, and stopped playing aggressive. We had to stop making turnovers, rebound and make our shots. Coach told us to relax during that time out in the fourth quarter. He just told us to calm down, pass the ball quick, and be patient for the good shot."

Jones came off the bench and poured in 12 points. The Pioneers had three players in double figures. Baker led the way with 14 points; Harrill finished with ten points. Jevon Morris led the Panthers with 16 points; Ethan Roper came off the bench and poured in 12 points for the Panthers. His bucket with 52 seconds left made it 54-50, but the Panthers never got any closer than the final score.

"It's a big win, that's for sure," Sanders said. "We were never out of this thing. Mentally, despite our poor (0-3) start (in conference play), our guys always felt they could contend in this league. We had a good balanced attack tonight. That's make it tough for a defense to key on just one guy. Defensively, especially in the last two minutes of the game, we really stepped it up.

"We knew they wanted Morris to touch the ball. He's their go-to guy. But Utah played him tight down the stretch and denied him the ball. But let's be honest, in 15 games, we still haven't put together four good quarters of basketball. The best is yet to come, and we're starting to gell at the right time."



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The Pioneers return home to play Hickory Friday night. And the Red Tornadoes (4-8; 3-2), like WHS, are getting hot at the right time. They've won three straight after an abysmal start.

"They're a very good team, and they've got a lots of great athletes," Sanders said. "Hey, they get after it, and like us, they know what's at stake. It's just another game we have to win, if we want to stay in this race. We'll give it our best shot Friday night."

Coverage of Friday's game between the Pioneers and Hickory Friday night begins at 6:05 p.m. on AM 1450, WATA and GoBlueridge.net.

**WATAUGA 59, PATTON 53**

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### SCORE BY PERIODS 1 2 3 4 TOTAL

WATAUGA HIGH 21 7 18 13 - 59

PATTON HIGH 11 12 13 17 - 53

**WHS:** HARRILL 10, GAILES 4, POULOS 6, DOBBINS 4, JONMES 12, EBAUGH 2, BAKER 14, LAMBERT 7. FG: 18, 3FG: 4, FT: 11-15.

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**PATTON:** BOSTIAN 7, WILLIAMS 4, ROPER 12, MORRIS 16, ERVIN 7, HAMER 2, HORTON 5. FG: 16, 3FG: 3, FT: 12-19.

## **NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE**

## **TUESDAY'S GAMES**

## **GIRLS:**

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**PATTON 61, WATAUGA 47**

**SOUTH CALDWELL 50, ST. STEPHENS 38**

**HICKORY 84, FRED T. FOARD 27**

**FREEDOM 66, HIBRITEN 16**

**BOYS:**

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**WATUAGA 59, PATTON 53**

ST. STEPHENS 73, SOUTH CALDWELL 55

HICKORY 48, FRED T. FOARD 43

FREEDOM 54, HIBRITEN 32

**FRIDAY'S GAMES**

**(BOYS & GIRLS)**

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**HICKORY @ WATAUGA**

**SOUTH CALDWELL @ FRED T. FOARD**

**PATTON @ HIBRITEN**

**ST. STEPHENS @ FREEDOM**

**NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE STANDINGS**

**GIRLS:**

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HICKORY 5-0; 12-0

FREEDOM 4-1; 9-5

**WATAUGA 3-2; 5-10**

SOUTH CALDWELL 3-2; 10-5

PATTON 2-3; 6-8

ST. STEPHENS 2-3; 7-8

FRED T. FOARD 1-4; 2-11

HIBRITEN 0-5; 1-11

**BOYS:**

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FREEDOM 5-0; 13-0

PATTON 3-2; 9-5

ST. STEPHENS 3-2; 11-4

HICKORY 3-2; 4-8

**WATAUGA 2-3; 11-4**

FRED T. FOARD 2-3; 7-7

HIBRITEN 2-3; 6-5

SOUTH CALDWELL 0-5; 1-13

**Photo Courtesy: Cameron Baker, WHS Athletics**



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