

## Fuller Shoots Down Pioneers

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 18 January 2014 02:39

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Hickory High senior Davonte Fuller put on a shooting clinic Friday night. The end result, Hickory, which began the season 0-7, won its fourth consecutive game by knocking off Watauga 86-80 in overtime at

Lentz-Eggers Gym.

Fuller scored a LE Gym record 48 points in the win. Eight of those came in the overtime period as the Red Tornadoes (5-8 overall; 4-2 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) built an 83-75 lead with 1:08 to play.

It was Fuller's jump shot that snapped a 75-75 tie and sent the Red Torndoes on their way. The win moves Hickory into a second-place tie with Patton, but the Panthers, who lost to WHS Tuesday night, own the tie-breaker against Hickory.

They beat the Red Tornadoes back on December 17. In turn, the loss leaves WHS (11-5; 2-4) in a two-tie for sixth place with Hibriten.

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"We just couldn't stop the (Fuller)," WHS coach Rob Sanders said. "He's extremely athletic. We played a zone, and he shot over it. The guy really carried his team tonight. He made some big shots against us."

But it was Shakeed Washington, who hit the biggest shot of the game. With Hickory trailing 72-69 and time running out, Washington buried a three from the far corner that tied the game with 15.9 seconds left in regulation time.

Cameron Baker could have won it as time expired for WHS, but his floater in the lane danced off the rim.

"They got after it," Sanders said. "We started playing fast in the fourth quarter and lost our composure. We built our lead with patience and good shot selection. But we told our guys that this team wasn't going away. The fourth quarter has been their best quarter all season. And I felt once we got that lead down the stretch, we started playing not to lose, and it cost us."

The Pioneers took the lead with a 12-1 run in the second quarter. Harrill and Baker combined for 11 points in the run. WHS led 39-33 at halftime and 58-48 to start the fourth quarter.

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The Red Tornadoes cut the lead to three at 60-57, but WHS junior Matt Lambert, who was scoreless going into the fourth quarter, stretched WHS' lead back to seven point at 66-59 with 3:26 to go. A conventional three-point play and a trifecta by Lambert helped WHS build that lead.

But the Red Tornadoes turned it up a notch and outscored WHS 13-3 the rest of the way to force overtime. Fuller had seven points in that run. WHS also made seven turnovers in the fourth quarter.

"We built our lead by simply rebounding the basketball," Sanders said. "And if we do that for four quarters, we win this game. But they turned up the pressure on us and we started playing quick. We made one pass and chucked it up. Look, we poured our hearts out there tonight. We gave it everything we had, but we didn't play smart basketball at the end."

Washington finished with 11 points; Patrick Creech finished with 12 for the Red Tornadoes. Harrill and Baker paced WHS with 21 points apiece. Baker, who fouled out with 45.2 seconds left in overtime, had a team-high 12 rebounds. Trevor Eggers finished with nine points.

The Pioneers begin a two-game road trip Tuesday night in Sawmills against South Caldwell. The Spartans, who lost to Fred T. Foard Friday night, are winless in conference play.

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"We had the opportunity to get back to .500 tonight (in league play)," Sanders said. "It's a huge loss. Now, we're in a must-win situation, and we have to run the table. We've got two tough games coming up on the road next week.

"We have to combine our effort with the smarts. Adjustments will be made as against us as we go around the league for a second time. People know we can shoot it from the outside, so they're going to make the necessary adjustments against us. We have to adapt and play smarter."

Coverage Tuesday night begins at 6:05 p.m. on Classic Hits 100.7 FM and GoBlueridge.net.

**HICKORY 86, WATAUGA 80 (OT)**

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

HICKORY HIGH 16 17 15 24 14 - 86

WATAUGA HIGH 13 26 19 14 8 - 80

**HHS:** LINEBARGER 3, WALKER 5, CREECH 12, FULLER 48, ABERNATHY 6, WASHINGTON 11. HELMS 1. FG: 18, 3FG: 9, FT: 23-35.

**WHS:** HARRILL 21 (9 REBOUNDS), EGGERS 9, GAILES 3 (4 ASSISTS), POULOS 7 (4 ASSISTS), DOBBINS 5, JONES 8, BAKER 21 (12 REBOUNDS), LAMBERT 6 (7 REBOUNDS). FG: 16, 3FG: 12, FT: 12-14.

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### HICKORY GIRLS 65, WATAUGA 41

The final score doesn't indicate just how close Friday night's game between the Watauga High girl's basketball team and Hickory really was.

The Pioneer, who were heavy underdogs coming in, gave, arguably, one of the best teams in western North Carolina a huge scare. The Red Tornadoes (13-0 overall; 6-0 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) eventually prevailed 65-41, but the Pioneers (5-11; 3-3) gave them fits.

The Red Tornadoes finally broke the game open in the fourth quarter by outscoring WHS 19-3 in the frame. Leading 46-38, Hickory went on a 13-2 run and built a commanding 59-40 lead. Sedasia Tipps capped things off with a conventional three-point play.

"I thought once we found our rhythm on defense, we played much better on offense," said Hickory coach Barbara Helms. "I thought we eventually wore them down in the fourth quarter. (Watauga) played a very good first half. They were consistent. But I thought we took more pride

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in our defense in the second half."

"I really thought the turning point in the game was when Barbara made a great decision to pack her defense in," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "That won the game for them. They forced us to shoot the ball from the outside. We were great in the transition game tonight, our defense was terrific, but we didn't shoot it too well from the outside."

Kaelin McNeill carried WHS in the first half as she poured in 13 points. But she didn't score in the second half. Ryan Loflin finished with 11 points. Savanna Wood finished with eight.

The Red Tornadoes had four players in double figures. Danasia Witherspoon and Brittany Dixon led the Red Tornadoes with 15 points apiece; Yazman Hannah finished with 13 points; Tipps had 11.

"The addition of Dixon and Tipps was just what the doctor ordered for Danasia and Yazman," Anderson said. "It gives them a much more balanced attack. They've got four girls that can score in double figures every night."

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The Pioneers trailed 17-13 after one, and 32-24 at halftime. WHS close out the first half on a five point run and trimmed Hickory's 13-point lead down to eight at the break.

"And that was big for us," Anderson said. "They could have blown us out right there. But I called a time out, and the girls responded with five quick points and cut into that lead."

Hickory led 46-38 to start the fourth quarter before it broke the game open. Witherspoon, Hannah and Tipps combined for seven points in that decisive fourth-quarter run. A bucket by Grayson Cameron gave Hickory a 20-point lead at 61-41.

"This was definitely not a 20-point game," Anderson said. "I'm really proud of what we did. I didn't substitute a lot tonight. I only went with six girls. It was a great effort on our part. We just came up short."

The loss leaves WHS in a two-way tie for fourth place with Patton. The Panthers defeated Hibriten 72-30 Friday night. WHS travels to South Caldwell Tuesday night. The Spartans (4-2 NW3A/4A) are currently all alone in third place.

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"We always talk about growing as a team," Anderson said. "Some of our girls might have been a little surprised tonight by what we did. But it's all about confidence when you play good teams like this. Hopefully, we grew up a little bit tonight. I like where we are, and I can't wait to play on Tuesday."

Coverage begins at 6:05 p.m. on Classic Hits 100.7 FM and GoBlueridge.net.

**NOTES:** Hickory beat the WHS junior varsity girls, 39-34. Karson Hamrick led WHS with 11 points; Olivia Reece had seven points. Janaisha Rheinhart led Hickory with ten points....The WHS JV boys beat Hickory, 58-48. Zach Valet led WHS with 18 points, Caleb Bryson had 14 points. Harrison Cobb finished with 8 points, Nick Sherman had seven points.

**HICKORY 65, WATUAGA 41**

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### SCORE BY PERIODS 1 2 3 4 TOTAL

HICKORY HIGH 17 15 14 19 - 65

WATAUGA HIGH 13 11 14 3 - 41

**HHS:** ECKARD 3, WITHERSPOON 15, HANNAH 13, DIXON 15, TIPPS 11, CAMERON 4, MILLER 4. FG: 23, 3FG: 5, FT: 4-10.

**WHS:** WOOD 8, DERRICK 2, CARROLL 5, LOFLIN 11, FARTHING 2, McNEILL 13. FG: 14, 3FG: 2, FT: 7-12.

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## **NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A SCOREBOARD**

### **FRIDAY'S GAMES**

#### **GIRLS:**

**Hickory 65, Watauga 41**

Patton 72, Hibriten 30

Freedom 59, St. Stephens 39

S. Caldwell 70, Fred T. Foard 36

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### **BOYS:**

**Hickory 86, Watauga 80**

Patton 69, Hibriten 42

Freedom 71, St. Stephens 56

Fred T. Foard 72, S. Caldwell 53

**Photo Courtesy: Utah Jones, WHS Athletics**

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