

Gailes Leads WHS To Must Win

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 08 February 2014 12:19

The smallest guy on the floor hit the biggest shot of the game Friday night. Watauga High senior Eli Gailes nailed a three pointer from the top of the key with 2:05 left to play that put the Pioneers on top for good.

WHS (14-8 overall; 5-7 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) hung on from there and defeated Patton 84-77 at Lentz-Eggers Gym. The win leaves WHS in a two-way tie for fifth place with St. Stephens and just one game behind Patton for fourth place and home-court advantage in the opening-round of the NW3A/4A Conference tournament, which begins Monday, February 17. South Caldwell defeated St. Stephens 66-58 Friday night for its first conference win.

The win also give WHS a sweep of the season series against Patton. Gailes finished with ten points and ten assists. Adding to the drama, the Pioneers were also without senior Cam Baker, who sat out Friday night's game after he had his wisdom teeth removed on Wednesday.

"Everything worked well tonight," said Gailes. "We moved the ball around and our big guys were finishing. We got the rebounds, we hit a lot of putbacks, we just played real well together tonight."

"I'm real proud of our guys tonight," WHS coach Rob Sanders said. "We won a huge game without one of our best players on the floor. It was a solid team effort and everyone contributed."

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Eli got away with a little bit of a Michael Jordan separation. He didn't get caught, and he hit a big shot."

The Pioneers also got a standout performance from sophomore Aaron Dobbins, who made his first varsity start and had a career night with 20 points, 15 rebounds and four blocked shots.

"When (Aaron) found out Cam wasn't playing, and he got the start, he really rose to the occasion," Sanders said. "He owned the boards, and he was a force inside. I'm extremely proud of him."

The Pioneers, who built an eight-point lead in the first quarter, eventually fell behind midway through the second period. Trailing 38-33, the Panthers (12-9; 6-6) ran off 12 consecutive points and led 45-38 just before halftime. Collins Hamer's three ball snapped a 38-38 tie and handed Patton its first lead of the game.

The tightly-contested game was tied ten times. The last time at 71-all before Gailes hit his three-point bomb. And the Pioneers, who were a woeful 1-10 at the foul line in the second half of Tuesday night's loss at Hibriten, were nearly impeccable Friday night.

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They were 17-17 at the foul line, 14-14 in the fourth quarter. They nailed six straight free throws in the final minute of the game that kept it out of reach.

"We did a terrible job shooting free throws at Hibriten," said WHS junior T.J. Poulos, who dished out seven assists. "We really worked on free throws the last two days at practice. But everything was clicking tonight. Guys were getting open, the shooters were hitting, and our post guys were finishing inside. (Patton) shot the ball well, and they hit some NBA threes, but we can't do anything about that. We just had to play our game, and we did that tonight."

Isaiah Williams was Patton's biggest weapon. He buried four trifectas in the second quarter, sparking Patton's 12-point run. But he also picked up his third foul during that stretch, putting him on the bench. He finished with 14 points. He was one of four players in double figures. Jevon Morris was a huge thorn in WHS' side. He led the Panthers with a team-high 22 points.

But the Pioneers finally clamped down defensively once they jumped on top. The Panthers never got any closer than three points the rest of the way, the last time at 80-77 with 45.5 seconds left.

"Our interior guys played their best game of the year," Sanders said. "We've been such a perimeter team all year. But tonight, with Cam on the bench, our big guys responded in a big

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way. And Aaron was all over the place inside. It looked like he was getting to every loose ball. At one point, I told (assistant) coach (Jerry) Moretz, 'he must have around 30 rebounds.'"

But Dobbins wasn't alone. Matt Lambert finished with 12 points and seven rebounds. Jay Harrill led the Pioneers with a game-high 25 points; the Pioneers had 24 assists as a team.

"It was good to see Jay off to a good start," Sanders said. "He really placed Tuesday's loss on his shoulders. But he had the touch tonight.

And we had a great night finding the open man. Eli had ten assists, and that's not even his season high (16 assists). It was just a great win that we really needed."

Up next, a road game at Hickory Tuesday night. The Pioneers let one get away in their initial meeting back on January 17 at LE Gym. But Devonte Fuller rallied his team as he scored a LE Gym record 48 points, and the Red Tornadoes prevailed 86-80 in overtime.

"We should have won that game," Sanders said. "But it's been the story of our season, giving games away. But Devonte was unbelievable. The guy scores 48 points in a 32-minute game. We just couldn't stop him. But Tuesday's game is huge. If we can win out, we can salvage fourth place, and we can host a first-round game."

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

NOTES: Patton defeated the WHS junior varsity girls 37-35 Friday night. Alina Kosmala and Karson Hamrick each had seven points apiece. Allison Quinn had six points....The WHS JV boys defeated Patton, 56-49. Dillon Carmichael led the Pioneers with 11 points. Jeremy Ringler had ten points; Holden Russell had nine.

WATAUGA 84, PATTON 77

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SCORE BY PERIODS 1 2 3 4 TOTAL

PATTON HIGH 21 26 12 18 - 77

WATAUGA HIGH 25 17 16 26 - 84

PHS: BOSTIAN 2, WILLIAMS 14, ROPER 12, MORRIS 22, ERVIN 7, HAMER 8, HORTON 12.
FG: 20, 3FG: 8, FT: 13-18.

WHS: HARRILL 25 (5 REBOUNDS), EGGERS 8, GAILES 10 (10 ASSISTS, 2 STEALS),
POULOS 2 (7 ASSISTS), DOBBINS 20 (15 REBOUNDS, 4 BLOCKS), JONES 5 (2 BLOCKS),
LAMBERT 12 (7 REBOUNDS). FG: 20, 3FG: 9, FT: 17-19, 24 ASSISTS.

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PATTON GIRLS 71, WATAUGA 62

It's been the theme all season. The Watauga High girl's basketball team plays a competitive game, but comes up short in the end. And that scenario played itself out Friday night at Lentz-Eggers Gym.

Patton outlasted WHS 71-62 in a must-win game for both teams. With the win, the Panthers (10-11 overall; 6-6 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) move into a two-way tie with St. Stephens for the No.4 seed and a home game in the opening round of the conference tournament, which begins February 17.

South Caldwell defeated St. Stephens, 55-50, Friday night. The Spartans also clinched third place with that win. The loss leaves WHS (7-15; 5-7) in sixth place, a game behind the Panthers and the Indians with two games to play.

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"We played our guts out tonight," said WHS coach Klay Anderson. "But they hit a lot of threes, and they had at least four two-and-ones, and that kills your momentum. We played as fast and as hard as we can, and we outplayed them. I hurt for my girls. How many open looks did we get in the fourth quarter? And we couldn't make those shots. But give Patton credit, they shot the ball extremely well, and (Lindsey) Adams made some huge threes in the second half."

Adams, who was on the bench with two fouls in the first half, erupted for 15 points, including three trifectas, in the second half. She finished with 17 points.

Her three ball with 6:53 left in the third quarter gave the Panthers a 37-35 lead, and they never trailed again.

But the Pioneers, led by Ryan Loflin's team-high 17 points, kept the Panthers in check. Trailing 52-45, the Pioneers rallied and cut the lead to one, 52-51 early in the fourth quarter on a stick-back by Kaelin McNeill.

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But the Panthers went on a 14-2 run and built a commanding 63-53 lead with 5:22 left to play. Adams had five points in that run; Taylor Chapman, who finished with 14 points, hit the three that ignited Patton's run.

The Panthers also made their first nine free-throw attempts, and were 17-23 on the night.

"I don't know if they missed anything," Anderson said with a grin. "The backboard was their rim. If they just hit the backboard, it seemed to go in. They were outstanding. By our count, they made (23-60 from the floor), that's at least (58%) from the floor. We shot the ball well ourselves, but we just ran into a buzzsaw tonight."

Loflin left the game briefly when she injured her lower back after she collided with Adams of the Panthers late in the third quarter. But she returned early in the fourth.

"It was just a stinger," Anderson said. "She hit the floor pretty hard on her tailbone. We were glad to get her back. She'll be sore the next couple of days, but she shouldn't miss any time. Ryan had a great game tonight. She attacked the basket, and she was very aggressive on defense. She did a great job."

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The Pioneers had four players in double figures. Savanna Wood finished with 12 points. Tori Derrick and McNeill each had ten points apiece. McNeill also had a team-high 16 rebounds. Loflin had seven rebounds and five assists. Derrick, who fouled out with 12.9 seconds left, had ten boards.

The Pioneers travel to Hickory Tuesday night. The Red Tornadoes are ranked second in the state in the NCPreps.com Class 3A poll. Hickory (18-0; 12-0) blasted Fred T. Foard 68-13 Friday night.

"This loss puts us in a tough position," Anderson said. "Win our last two, and we get the No.4 seed. Best case scenario, especially, if we want to see St. Stephens again, we've got to win at least one game and we finish fifth."

Coverage of Tuesday night game's from Hickory begins at 6:05 p.m. on Classic Hits 100.7 FM and GoBlueridge.net.

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PATTON 71, WATAUGA 62

SCORE BY PERIODS 1 2 3 4 TOTAL

PATTON HIGH 22 10 20 19 - 71

WATAUGA HIGH 15 18 16 13 - 62

PHS: BAUER 4, TALLENT 10, LeCROY 2, ROOKS 17, PUTNAM 5, CHAPMAN 14, LYNN 2, ADAMS 17. FG: 15, 3FG: 8, FT: 17-23.

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WHS: WOOD 12, DERRICK 10 (10 REBOUNDS), HARRIS 4, CARROLL 4, LOFLIN 17 (7 REBOUNDS, 5 ASSISTS), FARTHING 2, McNEILL 10 (16 REBOUNDS), FOUTZ 3. FG: 22, 3FG: 2, FT: 12-21.

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE

FRIDAY'S GAMES

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Girls:

Hickory 68, Fred T. Foard 13

Patton 71, Watauga 62

South Caldwell 55, St. Stephens 50

Freedom 68, Hibriten 29

Boys:

Freedom 91, Hibriten 53

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Hickory 42, Fred T. Foard 38

S. Caldwell 66, St. Stephens 58

Watauga 84, Patton 77

Photo Courtesy: Eli Gailes, Mark Branch

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