

Pioneers Give One Away

Written by Mike Kelly
Saturday, 22 March 2014 07:16

The Watauga High baseball team was in a generous mood Friday night. The end result, the Pioneers dropped a 4-3 decision in eight innings to Hibriten at Pioneers Field in a very important game for both

teams in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference.

The Pioneers, "unofficially", made a team-record eight errors in the loss. And the loss drops WHS (4-4 overall; 2-2 NW3A/4A) into a four-way tie for third place in the conference standings with Hibriten (4-4; 2-2), South Caldwell and Patton (which comes to Boone to play WHS Tuesday night).

Fred T. Foard (5-3; 4-0) continued its winning ways with a 2-1 win against Patton Friday night.

It was also Hibriten's first win at WHS in six tries, since the teams became conference rivals in 2009-10. WHS made all its errors in three of the last four innings.

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"I'm surprised it was only 4-3, to be honest with you," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "I know we were ready to play, but we didn't play with a lot of pride. We didn't deserved to win."

Leading 2-1, errors by Steadman Sauls and Justin Greer allowed the tying run to score in the fifth; four errors led to another run and gave Hibriten a 3-2 lead in the top of the seventh. But WHS tied the game, thanks to an RBI single by Carson Isaacs in the bottom of the seventh, that forced extra innings.

But a pair of miscues, including a throwing error by a sure-handed Andy Critcher in the top of the eighth, allowed the eventual winning run to score.

What hurts most, the Panthers, who also snapped a two-game losing streak, only made three hits, including one in the last two innings---an infield single by Colton Henthorne that drove in a run in the seventh.

The Panthers scored the game-winner without the benefit of a base hit in the eighth.

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Carson Isaacs' was WHS most productive hitter. The senior went 3-4 with an RBI. Colby Illich was 2-3 batting ninth in the order; the Pioneers made eight hits.

Utah Jones (1-1 with 2 saves), the third pitcher used by WHS coach Pete Hardee Friday night, suffered the loss. He coughed up two unearned runs on one hit in 2.2 innings.

But the Pioneers gave up seven walks, five of those by starting pitcher Hunter Isaacs, who left the game after he faced two men in the fourth. The Pioneers have walked 13 batters in their last two games.

Michael Davis, who coughed up two runs in the first inning, went the distance and got the win for the Panthers. The right hander gave up three earned runs on eight hits with three walks and he struck out six. He also hit two men.

The Pioneers take on A.C. Reynolds Saturday at Pioneers Field. The varsity game begins at 12 noon; the junior varsity game starts at 2 p.m.; coverage of today's varsity game begins at 11:30 a.m., on AM 1450, WATA and GoBlueridge.net.

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NOTES: Hibriten won the junior varsity game, 10-6....The Pioneers made, at the time, a season-high four errors in a 7-0 loss at North Davidson on March 5....Relief pitcher Jeffrey Gainey coughed up his first earned run of the season Friday night. But the right hander gave up only one hit and struck out one. He has a 0.97 earned-run-average in four appearances this season.

FRIDAY'S GAMES

Northwestern 3A-4A

Fred T. Foard 2, Patton 1

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Hibriten 4, Watauga 3, 8 inn.

Hickory 10, St. Stephens 3

S. Caldwell 3, Freedom 1

NORTHWESTERN 3A-4A

Conf. All

Fred T. Foard 4-0 5-3

Hickory 3-1 5-3

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Patton 2-2 6-3

WATAUGA (4A) 2-2 4-4

South Caldwell (4A) 2-2 7-2

Hibriten 2-2 4-4

St. Stephens 1-3 2-4

Freedom 0-4 4-4

SATURDAY'S GAMES

A.C. Reynolds @ Watauga

Hibriten @ Myers Park