

## "I Can't Watch This....."

Written by Mike Kelly  
Saturday, 12 April 2014 08:58

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I'm sure that's the way Watauga High baseball coach Pete Hardee felt Friday night. And who can blame him. The Pioneers made six errors, they coughed up seven walks and they also hit two batters.

And all of those miscue handed Freedom (5-10 overall; 1-9 Northwestern 3A-4A Conference) a 10-5 win at Pioneer Field. And the win was monumental for the Patriots. They snapped a ten-game losing streak, they picked up their first win in Boone since 2005 (remember these teams didn't play each other from the fall of 2009 to the spring of 2013 due to realignment); they beat the Pioneers for the first time in nearly ten years, and the Patriots finally cracked the win column in conference play.

Meanwhile, the Pioneers (7-9; 4-6) continue to struggle. The loss leaves them mired in a fifth-place tie with Hickory, just one game behind Hibriten (who they play Tuesday) for fourth place in the NW3A-4A standings.

"The conference championship is obviously out of the question," said WHS coach Pete Hardee. "Now, it's a question of whether or not we can develop into a good playoff team. That's a great measuring stick for your program. How deep can you go in the state playoffs. But it all comes down to focus and pre-game preparation with this team. We don't seem ready to play, and we've made a lot of mistakes, especially on the infield. We just can't seem to make the routine plays when we need to."

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That was truly visible in the sixth inning Friday night. The Patriots snapped a 5-5 tie with a five run uprising. Four errors, a walk, a pair of sacrifices, and an run-scoring double by Morgan Yancy highlighted the assault and gave the Patriots a 10-5 lead.

The Patriots, who only made six hits against four WHS pitchers, got their lead-off man on six times Friday night. They also scored nine of their runs on just three hits.

"I made a couple of mistakes early in the game and it killed what would have been a huge inning for our guys," said FHS coach Clint Zimmerman. "So, I just decided to let my guys swing away. We laid down a couple of successful sacrifices (four to be exact) and it set the stage for our hitters."

Friday's win was FHS' first since March 5, when they beat Highland Tech, and the Patriots also scored more than four runs in a game since March 5, when they scored nine run in that game.

"We just haven't scored a lot of runs in conference," Zimmerman said. "It's been a struggle. And

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its cost us some games. But tonight, we took advantage of their mistakes and it really helped us."

Hunter Isaacs (3-2), the fourth and final pitcher used by Hardee, suffered the loss. He was victimized for five runs, all unearned, thanks to four WHS errors in the sixth. Jeffrey Gainey got the start and left with one out in the third.

He gave up four runs, three earned, with three walks, five wild pitches, and he hit a batter. Three of those wild pitches came in the first inning when Jacob Honeycutt walked to start the game before he came around to score without the benefit of a base hit.

Landon Kincaid (3-2) went the distance for FHS. The right hander, who coughed up four runs in the fourth inning that gave WHS a shortlived 5-4 lead, weathered the storm and settled down. He coughed up five runs, only one earned, on six hits with eight strikeouts. He also walked two and he hit two batters.

"Landon threw the ball real well tonight," Zimmerman said. "He had that one rough inning, but he got through it. The main thing is that we scored some runs tonight. Scoring runs, a lot of them, has been a problem until tonight."

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Paul Pieto was 1-2 with a double, a sac fly, a walk, two RBI and he scored a run; Yancy was 1-2 with an RBI double; Kincaid helped his own cause going 2-4.

Utah Jones was 1-4 with a double and an RBI for the Pioneers; Carson Isaacs was 2-4; Colby Illich and Justin Greer were each 1-3.

The Pioneers travel to Lenior, N.C., to play Hibriten Tuesday night. Coverage begins at 6 p.m. on AM 1450, WATA and GoBlueridge.net.

**NOTES:** Freedom defeated the WHS junior varsity team 11-9 in five innings.....The Pioneers have made 37 errors in 16 games. That's an average of 2.4 errors a game....Junior Matt Lambert missed Friday's game to attend his grandfather's funeral. Justin Greer replaced Lambert and made his first start of the season at third base.

## FRIDAY'S RESULTS

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### **BASEBALL**

**Northwestern 3A-4A**

**Freedom 10, Watauga 5**

Fred T. Foard 13, Hibriten 8

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Patton 11, St. Stephens 4

South Caldwell 12, Hickory 1

### Saturday's games

Freedom @ Draughn

Hibriten @ west Caldwell

### Northwestern 3A-4A Baseball Standings

Fred T. Foard 9-1; 10-4

South Caldwell 8-2; 13-2

Patton 7-3; 11-5

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Hibriten 5-5; 8-8

**Watauga** 4-6; 7-9

Hickory 4-6; 6-8

St. Stephens 2-8; 3-11

Freedom 1-9; 5-10