

UPDATED: Pioneers Take On McDowell In Playoff Opener

Written by Mike Kelly
Monday, 12 May 2014 09:16

Watauga High baseball coach Pete Hardee has announced that the Pioneers will play at McDowell Wednesday night at 7 p.m. in the opening round of the

NCHSAA Class 4A state baseball playoffs.

WHS is the No.2 seed from the Northwestern 3A-4A Conference; McDowell (13-9) is the No.2 seed from the Mountain Athletic 3A-4A Conference. McDowell gets to host because it has a better overall record.

Hunter Isaacs (4-2 with a 3.09 earned-run-average) will get the starting nod for the Pioneers. Isaacs ignited WHS' (13-13) Cinderella run the conference tournament with eight shutout innings in relief in a first-round, 4-3, nine-inning win at Patton last Tuesday night. The right hander scattered seven hits and struck out eight. He also hit the game-winning home run in the top of the ninth.

The Pioneers knocked off South Caldwell 6-3 in the finals Friday night. Stedman Sauls, who was 6-10 in the tournament, was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. The Pioneers captured their fourth conference tournament title in school history, and their second championship in four years.

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McDowell is led by head coach Alex Smith. This is the first meeting between the schools since 2009. The Pioneers and Titans were once members of the old Northwestern 4A Conference. The Titans defeated WHS to win the NW4A Conference Tournament in 2001.

Coverage begins at 6:30 p.m. on AM 1450, WATA and GoBlueridge.net.

The Pioneers will also be without right fielder Matt Tyndall, who has been diagnosed with mononucleosis. He'll be on the shelf for two weeks, according to Hardee.

"I don't know who we will play in right field at the moment," Hardee said. " Having Hunter on the mound takes away one of our outfielders. But we have to adjust. We feel bad for Matt. He's been one of our steadiest performers all year. But the way we handle injuries around here, the next guy has to step up. We'll work on it for the next couple of days, and we'll put the best player available in right field."

The WHS softball team (3-13), the No.2 seed from the NW3A-4A, will open the state playoffs at Asheville-Roberson (12-11), the No.2 seed from the MAC 3A-4A. The Pioneers will play the Rams Wednesday at 5 p.m..

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The WHS girls' soccer team (14-5-3) is seeded eighth in the NCHSAA Class 4A state playoffs and the Pioneers will host Charlotte-Olympic (14-9) in the opening round. A playing date has not been announced. If WHS wins, the Pioneers would host Asheville-Roberson (14-6), the No.9 seed, or Mooresville (13-5-2), the No.24 seed, in the second round.