

The Watauga High baseball team travels to East Burke for a key Northwestern 4A Conference game on Friday night.

And the Pioneers (14-5 overall; 9-1 and in first place in the NW4A) will most like face arguably the best pitcher in the conference in senior Corey Rhoney.

Rhoney hit two home runs last night as the Cavaliers (9-7; 3-6 and in sixth place in the NW4A) in a non-conference game by blasting Draughn, 11-1. Those were the first home runs ever hit at Draughn High School. And Rhoney has been pretty tough on the Pioneers. Lifetime, he is 1-0 with two saves and one no decision. During that stretch, Rhoney, in four appearances, has two starts, no complete games and in 14 innings of work he's just given up one earned run and eight hits against WHS. He also has 23 strikeouts against the Pioneers, and a microscopic 0.50 earned-run-average.

In his last outing against WHS, Rhoney scattered two hits, walked three and struck out ten in seven innings of work. Rhoney, who left the game after the seventh, got a no-decision for his work. The Pioneers eventually won 1-0 as Phil Gordon's one-out single in the ninth scored Jake Wallace with the game-winning run in the ninth. Jon Shape turned in his best performance as the Pioneer. The senior right-hander went the distance, gave up one hit and struck out a career-high 14 men. He had a no-hitter for 6 2/3 innings before Cody Franklin of the Cavaliers broke it up with a two-out single in the seventh.

Cal Hardee (3-1) will make his first career start against the Cavaliers. The right-hander has two no-decisions and a loss in the last four appearances.

But in his defense, Hardee has gone up against Ragsdale and Providence during that stretch.

Also keep in mind, the Pioneers have had their problems in Icard. The Pioneers are 1-6 on that field since 2002. Their only win came in 2004, when the Pioneers rallied from an early 6-2 deficit and beat the Cavaliers 8-6 in eight innings. Rich Minford got the win in relief that night. Now, our coverage for this game begins at 6:05 pm Friday night on 100.7 MAC-FM.

In other games Wednesday night, South Caldwell improves to 14-3 as the Spartans blasted Wilkes Central 17-0 in five innings; and McDowell beat Asheville 8-7. There were six home runs hit in that game. And Appalachian State recruit William Head of Asheville was 2-4 with a home run and a run scored.

## NW4A baseball round-up for Thursday, April 23, 2009

Written by Mike Kelly

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There's one game on the schedule today: A.C. Reynolds plays Enka. The Alexander Central-T.C. Roberson game has been cancelled and probably won't be rescheduled. The Cougars play Freedom on Friday, and they play a make-up game at Providence on Saturday.