

## State baseball pairings have been released

Written by Mike Kelly  
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The North Carolina High School Athletic Association has released the baseball pairings for the state playoffs that begin on Friday night.

The Watauga High baseball team (17-7, and regular-season champions in the Northwestern 4A Conference) will open the state playoffs at home against Weddington (11-12, and the No.5 seed from the Southwestern 4A Conference). It's the first meeting ever between the schools. Senior Jon Sharpe (7-2) will get the starting nod, his first start in more than a week-and-a-half. The Warriors, coached by Travis Poole and who lost to Butler in the opening round of the SW4A tournament after blowing a 6-2 lead, aren't shy about scoring runs. They are averaging six runs-per-game, they've hit 23 home runs, including three grand slams. Brad Collins is their best hitter. He had two home runs and six RBI in a win against South Mecklenburg this season. Clay Thresher is their best pitcher. He threw a complete-game, 10-inning victory against Providence, handing the Panthers, the regular-season champions in the SW4A, their first and only loss in league play. They have scored ten runs or more four times this year, which includes a season-high 17-run explosion against Sun Valley. The biggest problem with this team has been pitching. Case in point, the Warriors scored 45 runs in their first four games this season, but they were 2-2 during that stretch. And they've also given up ten runs or more in a game three times. They've also had problems winning the close games, exemplified by their 4-7 record in one-run games. Our coverage begins at 6:25 pm Friday night on 100.7, MAC-FM.

In all, the NW4A received six playoff berths. The other match ups finds the No.2 seed and five time NW4A tournament champion South Caldwell (19-4) entertaining Berry Academy (5-15) at home on Friday night. Berry Academy is the No.3 seed from the Queen City 3A/4A Conference; McDowell (16-6), the No.3 seed, travels to Myers Park (18-8), the No.2 seed and the SW4A tournament champion, on Friday. A.C. Reynolds (13-9), the No.4 seed, travels to East Gaston (10-11), the No. 2 seed from the Big South 3A/4A Conference. East Burke (12-9) and Alexander Central ( 8-13) both received wildcard berths. The Cougars open up at Northwest Guilford (19-3) on Friday night. The Cavaliers are just up the road at West Forsyth (14-7).

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