

Pioneers stave off Spartans in conference opener

Written by Mike Kelly

Friday, 02 October 2009 19:24

The Watauga High football team made a solid debut in the newly-formed Northwestern 3A/4A Conference Friday night at Jack Groce Stadium.

The Pioneers avenged a shutout loss in the rain last season by beating South Caldwell, 20-15. It was WHS's third win in four tries against the Spartans, who have now lost four in a row following a 3-0 start.

WHS (4-2 overall, 1-0 NW3A/4A) got on the board with 1:05 to go in the first quarter on Logan Smith's nine-yard run. That play capped off a five-play, 61-yard drive. Smith, who was nursing a sprained shoulder last week, ran for a career-high 97 yards. "We did a good job outplaying a physical team,

" WHS coach Tim Pruitt said. "They moved the ball on us at times, but we maintained out blocks and we pushed them around when we had to. It was a good win. We played very well."

The Pioneers racked up 196 yards on the ground and 289 yards in total offense against a much-bigger team in South Caldwell (3-4; 0-2) that averaged nearly 260-pounds-a-man up front.

"At times our offensive line allowed us to march the ball up and down the field," Pruitt said. "I guess that's why we got somewhat conservative and didn't throw the ball much. We were having good success running the ball."

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Devan Corum was only 5-14 with an touchdown pass and an interception for 93 yards. He also had 73 yards on the ground. Travis Oliver, who suffered a separated shoulder against A.C. Reynolds two weeks ago, only caught three passes, but two of them practically decided the game.

A 47-yard hook up from Corum in the fourth quarter, and a 15-yard face-masking penalty on defensive back Nathan Diehl moved the Pioneers from their six-yard-line to South Caldwell's 32. Two plays later, Corum and Oliver hooked up again, this time on a 24 yard scoring pass that gave WHS a 20-9 lead with 6:07 to go.

"I felt 100 percent tonight," Oliver said. "Devan, I love him to death. He had a great game, and he's a great quarterback. This win gives us a lot of confidence for the Hibriten game next week."

Defensively, the Pioneers limited South Caldwell to 196 yards, including 127 on the ground. And Watauga's defensive front harassed Spartans quarterback Caleb Suddreth all night long. He was dropped for 17 yards in losses.

But he did hook up with Diehl on a 69-yard pass that set up South Caldwell's final touchdown with 4:22 left. Suddreth scored from two-yards out on a keeper to make it 20-25, but the Pioneers withstood the blow.

"We're playing with a lot of confidence right now," Oliver said.

Robbie Sherrill and Smith led the WHS defense with 11 stops each. Sherrill also had a quarterback sack. Jordan Pineda had nine tackles, two sacks and 2.5 tackles for loss. "They're tough, but we were tougher tonight," Sherrill said.

"And it felt good avenging that loss from last year. Now, we've got to get ready for Hibriten."

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The Pioneers travel to Hibriten next Friday night. Our coverage begins at 6:30 pm on Oldies 100.7 FM.

In other games Friday night:

Hibriten 34, St. Stephens 13

Hickory 28, Fred T. Foard 20

Alexander Central bye