

EVERLASTING JOY

JAMES CLARK

## Heading down the stretch

It's time for the WCHS basketball teams to build some down-the-stretch momentum as they put the finishing touches on the regular season and prepare for tournament competition.

Heading into Tuesday night's home game against White County, it's been a sparkling 16-4 season for the Pioneers. The Lady Pioneers are 11-10 and have shown flashes of promise, including a district win Saturday night in Cookeville.

So what can we expect from these teams as February, and the postseason, approaches?

It's been a different kind of year for the Pioneers with the most noticeable difference being the team's eye-catching record. To win 80 percent of your games is a great accomplishment.

Outside of the record, this is a team that looks to score from beyond the 3-point line. In over two decades, I've never seen a Warren County team rely so heavily on the 3-point shot, but that's how basketball, at all levels, is transforming.

We can either thank the Golden State Warriors or simple math for this. Based on what we've all learned in school, 3 is greater than 2, so shoot the 3.

In another shift, coach Chris Sullens doesn't rotate a high number of players, which is unusual for him. In a win last week against Rhea County, only seven Pioneers took the floor.

I like Warren County's overall athleticism and think the Pioneers can compete with Cookeville for the district title. I don't know if Saturday's loss in Cookeville is a fair indication of Warren County's capabilities.

I'm probably not the only one to have noticed this, but the Pioneers didn't get to practice all week because of snow, then they had to face the Cavs in Cookeville. That's not a blueprint for success.

On the girls side, the Lady Pioneers have beaten some decent teams this year. That includes a sweep of Tullahoma and a huge home win against Coffee County.

The problem, as you might expect, is beating teams with elite players. Upperman serves as a prime example.

There are some talent-packed teams in District 6-AAA, including Stone Memorial and Rhea County. It will be a challenge for the Lady Pioneers to beat either one of those teams, mainly due to their lack of baseline-to-baseline foot speed.

For the Pioneers to win the district tournament, it's going to take lights-out perimeter shooting from players like Chance Hobbs, Isaiah Grayson and Irving Espinoza.

For the Lady Pioneers, it's going to take monster play from Tyra Wright in the paint, combined with brilliant shooting from 3-point specialist Megan Patch.

## Clean sweep



Jeffery Simmons photos  
**Maddox Adams is met by a swarm of Boyd defenders in Monday's game. The Lady Broncos used a pressure defense to come back in the final quarter and down Dibrell 20-15.**

## Boyd takes two from Dibrell

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS  
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard  
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Frantic finishes were the calling card of elementary action at J.K. Stanley Gymnasium Monday night. In both games, the home squad was able to protect home court in the final minutes.

The Lady Broncos erased a five-point deficit in the final quarter to top Dibrell 20-15, while two late free throws from Nathan Turner helped the Boyd boys beat the Wildcats 33-31.

The Boyd girls entered the fourth quarter trailing 13-8. Needing a boost, coach Allison Stiles decided to turn up the heat on Dibrell.

"We went to man-to-man fullcourt pressure," said Stiles. "We got a few steals and baskets as a result. It was an exciting game and we're grateful to get the win."

Bella Stiles and Ava Jones

were at the forefront of the press and were able to get two layups apiece. Jones finished with a team-high 10 points, followed by Stiles with 8 and Lia Bedwell with 2.

Lily Rains led Dibrell with 7 points, while Abby Sullivan scored 4 and Sophie Woodlee and Emily Davis finished with 2 points each.

It was fitting Turner was at the line to give the Broncos a chance at victory. Turner calmly sank the late go-ahead free throws, part of an 18-point night. Kaden Mowl added 8 points as Boyd beat Dibrell for the third time this season. Thomas Burks chipped in 3, while Keyton Reno and Jordan Perry each had 2 points.

Garrison Randolph nearly shot Dibrell to victory. Randolph scored 20 points, including four second-half 3-pointers. Matthew Arnold added 8, while Zack Mullican scored 3.



**Nathan Turner scored 18 points to lead the Broncos past Dibrell. Boyd beat the Wildcats 33-31 Monday.**

## Lady Pioneers top Cookeville

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS  
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard  
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

A second later and it would've been too late.

Only the slightest gap existed as soon as Megan Patch caught a pass in the corner. She had a fraction of a second to launch before being pancaked.

Lying on the floor, the Lady Pioneer junior was able to see her pivotal 3-pointer swish through the net.

Patch's four-point play was the swing play as Warren County collected its first District 6-AAA victory 46-41 over Cookeville Saturday.

Patch finished with 10 points, none bigger than her play that gave Warren County a 39-33 lead with 2:50 left. Patch added a crucial layup with 30.2 seconds left after the Lady Pioneers struggled to seal the game at the free-throw line.

Tyra Wright added a



**MEGAN PATCH**

team-high 11 points to help Warren County snap a six-game losing streak to the Lady Cavaliers. Warren County held the lead for the entire second half, using a 10-2 run in the third quarter - bookended by 3-point plays from Wright and Bri Young - to go into the fourth ahead 31-23.

The victory improved the Lady Pioneers to 11-10 overall and 1-2 in district play.

Warren County will meet Stone Memorial Friday at 6 p.m.

## WCMS teams find success in tourney

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS  
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard  
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

The Warren County Middle School basketball teams have come to life at the perfect time.

The Pioneers and Lady Pioneers each collected wins in the opening round of the Central Tennessee Conference tournament held in Coffee County.

Bella Cantrell's big 3-pointer in overtime helped the Lady Pioneers defeat White County 27-24, while the emergence of Kaden Rutledge continued in the Pioneers' 38-31 victory over Shelbyville Harris.

The Lady Pioneers, who began the season 1-10, have turned the corner just in time. Winners of three of its last five games, Warren County continued its upward trend with a nail-biter against the Lady

Warriors.

Katie Toney hit key fourth-quarter free throw for the Lady Pioneers to help push the game into extra time. In OT, Cantrell hit the shot of the game when she buried the eventual game-winning 3-pointer.

It was part of a 7-point performance for Cantrell, while Toney paced the Lady Pioneers with 8 points. Marli McBride added 6, while Halo Armstrong chipped in 4 and Savannah Winfree scored 2.

Rutledge, a seventh grader, provided a huge boost for the boys by scoring a team-high 11 points. He was followed by Eli Kuykendall with 10, Caden Beaty with 6, Keldric Cox with 4, Chance Hunter with 3 and Hudson O'Connor and Asher Wallace with two points apiece.

## WCHS wrestling plans homecoming

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS  
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard  
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

With no seniors to recognize, coach Matt Turner has new plans for the final WCHS wrestling match. Turner is hoping former grapplers will come to Charlie Dalton Gym for a homecoming event.

The original event was planned for Jan. 19, but had to be moved due to inclement weather and the inability for teams to practice last week. Coach Turner has rescheduled the event for Tuesday, Jan. 30 and is welcoming all past Pioneers to take part in the festivities.

"We are planning on having an exciting environment

for the homecoming match, much like our first home match this season," said Turner. "We'll have opponents, as well as have the WCMS wrestling team and the youth AAU team here as well."

The high school team is set to face off against Coffee County and LaVergne at the event, which is set to begin with a weigh-in at 5 p.m.

Fans can get a good look at the current Pioneers, who feature returning state medalist Allison Vasquez and a young improving roster, like standout freshman Ike Gillentine - a recent medalist at the Redhawk Rampage meet held at Stewart's Creek.



## Elementary snapshots

At left, Hickory Creek guard Dyson Elam pushes the pace against WCMS.

Below, Brianna Taylor moves upcourt against the Lady Pioneers. WCMS won both games at Hickory Creek. Scores can be found on the Southern Standard website.



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