

Senior night excitement

BY **JEFFERY SIMMONS**
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No election was needed. There's a new sheriff in District 6-AAA and it's the Warren County Pioneers.

Warren County put itself in pole position in the district standings and for the top seed in next week's district tournament with a 58-56 victory over Cookeville Tuesday night.

"We had several goals before the season started and they build on each other," said coach Chris Sullens. "This is a big step toward our first goal – a district title. There's still work to be done, but we will enjoy this one for now."

Senior Tyree Ladet busted out in a big way, scoring a game-high 22 points, including the eventual game-winning putback layup with 33.2 seconds left. Ladet missed his initial layup following a clear out, but won the battle for the rebound and laid it in among a group of bodies.

It was a fitting close to a game where Warren County used grit and determination, supplanting the shooting and skill that had been its hallmark while building a 21-5 record, to avenge a 66-52 loss to the Cavaliers in January. The Pioneers rebounded 13 of their 30 misses and won despite season-lows in 3-pointers (five) and free throws made (one).

"This was about grit and desire. Two weeks ago, I wondered if we had enough grit to win a physical battle," said Sullens. "I think I got my answer."

Isaiah Grayson added 18 on a night where he, Ladet, Chance Hobbs (7 points), Caleb Newby (9 points) and Bunker Brock were honored on senior night. The group got the start and set the tone from the onset, pounding Cookeville in the paint – early body shots in what would become a heavyweight fight between the top two teams in the district.

Irving Espinoza brought a capacity crowd at Charlie Dalton Gym to its feet at the end of the



Tyree Ladet's season-high 22 points helped the Pioneers down Cookeville 58-56.



Chance Hobbs and the student section stare down a 3-pointer. Hobbs sank the shot during a pivotal third-quarter run.

first quarter, burying an 18-footer at the buzzer to give the Pioneers an early 19-17 advantage. Cookeville bounced back in the second quarter, using nine points from Alex Garrett and a late 8-0 run to go into halftime leading 37-29.

Warren County swung the tide coming out of the locker rooms. Ladet and Grayson got on the board with back-to-back layups, prompting Cavalier coach Kevin Bray to call a timeout just 48 seconds into the second half.

The break did little to slow the Pioneers. Chance Hobbs hit a 3-pointer right in front of the student section to draw Warren County within one, 40-39, minutes later. Grayson gave the Pioneers their first lead of the second half on the next possession, knifing through the lane for a leaning layup.

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Jeffery Simmons photos



Isaiah Grayson, one of five seniors honored Tuesday, scored 18 points in a win.



The student section was raucous Tuesday on senior night. Coach Sullens sent out a special thanks for the great crowd following the game.



The Pioneer bench cheers on its teammates during Tuesday's big win. Pictured are, from left, Eli Jones, Eli Buchanan, Jerry Mrema and Austin Hodges.



Chris Sullens fist pumps after a big basket.

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