

EVERLASTING JOY

JAMES CLARK



Pioneer sports excelling

For those of you keeping score, it's been a festive year in sports for our beloved Warren County High School.

On balance, our teams have been highly competitive as we head into what I call our wheelhouse – spring sports. Let's take a quick glimpse at what's gone right.

Valeria Vargas kept it on the fairways and hit the greens as the Lady Pioneer golfer claimed 15th place in the state tournament.

A few weeks later, the Lady Pioneer volleyball team advanced to the region tournament to put an exclamation point on a highlight-filled season that saw the girls finish 23-12.

Distance runner Christian Locke kept the Pioneers on pace at the state cross country tournament where he finished in the top third of all competitors.

Basketball season has been a gem for the WCHS boys, who had an impressive 23-7 record heading into Tuesday night's regional semifinal. The Pioneers won a region tournament basketball game last week for the first time in decades.

The Lady Pioneer basketball team also qualified for the region tournament, giving that program a solid building block for next year.

That brings us to today, the last day of diminutive February, and the brink of spring sports. I predict WCHS will be able to leap tall buildings in the big three sports of baseball, boys soccer and softball.

The girls fast-pitch softball team is coming off a regular-season district championship and has many key cogs returning, especially stellar pitching. The biggest challenge I see is the loss of some big bats in the lineup, meaning the Lady Pioneers likely won't have such an explosive offensive to bail out what was, at times, a shaky defense last year.

The boys soccer team is expected to be bolstered by the arrival of coach Matt Jackson, who had a printing press for championships at the middle school level. With the exception of a couple newcomers, Jackson coached all of these boys during his run of five straight WCMS tournament titles so this will be a great indication of how middle school success translates to the high school level.

As for WCHS baseball, I expect it to be a glorious year for the Pioneers, who are coming off a 20-win season in 2017. The pitching staff has horses and the outfielders can run like gazelles. Animal analogies aside, the question marks surround an infield that lost its catcher and three other starters.

It's realistic to believe WCHS can contend for district titles in the three major spring sports. Folks like to chuckle and poke fun of WCHS athletics, but we haven't been a punchline this year.

Historic win

Pioneers end 37-year drought

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

Chance Hobbs didn't know he had the weight of 37 years of region futility resting on his shoulders Saturday. He was solely focused on doing his job.

Hobbs calmly sank two free throws with 29.2 seconds left, giving the Pioneers a final cushion to top Walker Valley 52-48 Saturday in the region quarterfinals. It was the first time Warren County (23-7) won a region game in 37 years.

Hobbs led the Pioneers with 14 points, none bigger than the sealing free throws in the waning seconds.

"It's just something you live for. I want to be the one with the ball in my hands to help secure a win," said Hobbs. "The key is to zone out all the fans, cheerleaders and players and concentrate on a wide-open 15-footer."

Warren County had to survive a strong push by the Mustangs in the final quarter. The Pioneers had given back almost all of a 15-point lead by the final minute, but the charity stripe proved to be a big difference.

Kolten Gibson, the Mustangs' leading scorer and all-district honoree, found himself on the free-throw line with a chance to knot the score with 57.3 seconds left. Gibson was off target on both shots, but the Mustangs were able to get the offensive rebound off the second miss.

The ball found Jordan Munck, who led the Mustangs with 18 points Saturday, on the baseline. Two Pioneers converged, but Munck was able to shake both defenders to get an open look from 15 feet. His shot was too strong and Caleb Newby was able to secure the rebound for the Pioneers.



Isaiah Grayson works his way past Walker Valley's Zeke Westfield. Grayson's three 3-pointers in the third quarter helped spark a run that led to the Pioneers' 52-48 victory.

Jeffery Simmons photos

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Caleb Newby works inside against the Mustangs.



Tyree Ladet gets into defensive position against Walker Valley. Ladet had nine points in the region win Saturday.

PLAY BALL!

Games begin the week of April 23

Walk In Registration at the Civic Center NOW until Feb. 25 Monday - Saturday 9am - 4pm

For more info., call Athletic Coordinator, Terry Beard at 931-473-1212

Late Sign Ups (Feb. 26 - Mar. 3) Additional \$10

Co-Ed Tee Ball (4)	\$40	3rd Child Discount \$30
Boys & Girls Tee Ball (5-6)	\$40	
Boys & Girls (6-14)	\$50	
Premier Slow Pitch Softball (14-20)	\$40	