



Jacob Dodd photo

Maddie Cantrell and the Lady Pioneer softball team will begin their season Monday with a road game at Shelbyville. Monday is the official start of spring high school sports.

Spring sports are here

WCHS teams ready for season

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

The scrimmages are over. The friendly games are gone. It's time for teams to play for real.

The spring sports schedule begins Monday and three Warren County teams are looking to make waves in District 6AAA, two with new coaches at the helm.

The Pioneer baseball and soccer teams each go into the season with big expecta-

tions on their new coaches. Trice Powers takes over on the diamond after a 20-win season and a trip to the district finals and region tournament. Likewise, Matt Jackson will try to guide the soccer team back to the district finals and, hopefully this time, win.

Jackson's sights may be even higher.

"We can be a factor for the next few years," Jackson said when he was hired in November. "I hope we can get back to the state tourna-

ment soon, hopefully even challenging for a state title."

With a loaded roster filled with underclassmen, Jackson and the Pioneer soccer team will get started Tuesday with an away match against Coffee County. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

Powers and the Pioneers also have a roster that has the potential to be successful for years to come, but having senior arms like Tyler Hollingsworth and Trevor Collins also make the current Pioneers a threat.

Continued on 2B

Off and running

BY **JEFFERY SIMMONS**
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Bitter cold wasn't anything more than added wind resistance to the Warren County Middle School girls track team Thursday. Racing in 40-degree weather, the Lady Pioneers were able to top Franklin South in a home meet.

The Lady Pioneers took home seven first-place finishes, including five by individuals, to take top honors in the make-up event. The original meet was set for March 1, but had to be postponed due to bad weather.

The Warren County girls got off to a quick start, getting two victories in the field events. Savannah Winfree topped her competition in shotput, landing

her toss at a distance of 28 feet, 7 inches. She also took third in the discus with a toss of over 68 feet.

The Lady Pioneers also dominated the long jump, sweeping all three spots. Arica Walker won the event with a leap of 11 feet, 3 inches. Paige Sweeton and Chloe Volf were just behind, leaping 11 feet, 2 inches.

When Warren County hit the track, their relay teams put on an early show. The Lady Pioneers won both the 4x400 and 4x200 relays, giving them a big edge.

Carmen Verdel helped carry the team home. The sixth-grader won both the 800-meter and 1,600-meter races. Her times were 3 minutes, 12 seconds in the 800 and 7:32 in the 1,600.

Continued on 3B



Jeffery Simmons photo

Breanna Harris flies by the competition in the 100-meter race Thursday. The WCMS girls track team shook off the cold to win a home event against Franklin South.

Trying to comprehend rugby

SIMMONS SAYS

JEFFERY
SIMMONS



I consider myself a sports guy. Maybe not an athlete, not anymore anyway. But a guy who knows sports? Yeah, I would say that is an apt description.

Then I walked up on a rugby game and realized maybe I know nothing about sports. Rugby is unlike anything I've ever seen before.

Tuesday was my first foray into a sport that I would be describe as a combination of football, soccer and hand-to-hand combat. It wasn't quite Mortal Kombat, though plenty of plays left me thinking, "Finish him!"

My first question, which would be followed by hundreds more, was, "why would anybody want to play this?"

Don't get me wrong, it's not because it doesn't look fun or challenging. It's both. Athletes need endurance, strength and physicality while also enduring a grueling mental process that will test intestinal fortitude and the willingness to get back up over and over.

Because, make no mistake, you're going to end up on the ground a lot in rugby.



Jeffery Simmons photo

Jordan Hammond brings down a Riverdale player during Tuesday's rugby match. The Warren County rugby teams will be in action again this Friday, March 16 at home. Action begins at 5:30 p.m.

You're probably also going to get tackled, run over, hit, kicked, tripped and whatever other potential malady a body can befall on a sports field. It's all a

part of the game.

Luckily, Warren County has plenty of athletes who are more than willing to take some punishment so they can dish out even

more. In just four short years since starting up a rugby club, Warren County has already become a hotbed for talent. The girls rugby team won a state

championship in 2016 and one alumnus of the program – Lauren Judkins – has gone on to be a part of Team USA.

After watching the combat and carnage, I approached the match referee Randal Johnson at half-time. He had lots of answers for my rapid-fire questions.

WHAT AM I WATCHING? Johnson's response was I was witnessing the fastest growing sport in the USA.

HOW IS IT PLAYED? He went into detail of every action, what players do, what role they play and how teams score. He was in depth, patient and informative to the point where I almost thought I knew the game after 10 minutes.

He also left me with these two tidbits: The throw-in in rugby was an inspiration for the jump-ball in basketball and Dr. James Naismith invented hoops in small part to keep rugby teams in shape during the winter. And second, the word "touchdown" in football came from rugby, because players attempt a kick from the point at which they are touched down in the scoring zone.

I focused on the game afterward, only having my concentration broken when coaches started yelling "Dumptruck" over and over. It's a little different than Peyton Manning yelling, "Omaha."

Following the game, I drifted off trying to process what I've seen. I'm still not sure, but I'm ready to see more.



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