

EVERLASTING JOY

JAMES
CLARK

Let the madness begin

It's the only time of year folks in Middle Tennessee say the word Xavier.

March Madness has begun and the Xavier Musketeers have earned their first No. 1 seed in school history. Will they still be dancing come Final Four time? There's a solid chance, although North Carolina may have something to say about it.

If you're looking to win your office pool and claim bragging rights, there's a simple formula for success in the NCAA Tournament. I've yet to find that formula, so allow me to convey some feeble advice.

For starters, take the No. 1 and No. 2 seeds to win their first two games and reach the Sweet 16. Sure, there might be upsets along the way, almost always in a No. 5 and No. 12 game, but don't go crazy chasing upsets with the big dogs.

Remember, a No. 16 seed has never toppled a No. 1 power. No. 2 seeds have lost, but only rarely in the first round.

Look to the middle of the field, to teams seeded No. 10 to No. 14, if you want to pick an early sleeper. Just be sure to write an end to that Cinderella story before the tournament goes too deep because low-seeded teams hardly ever make the Elite 8.

As for teams to watch, I like No. 10 Oklahoma to win at least one game, even though analysts are pounding the Sooners for losing eight of their last 10. I think they beat Rhode Island and give streaky Duke a run in Round 2.

Also on my watch list is No. 3 seed Michigan State. As hard as it may be to believe, the Spartans and coach Tom Izzo haven't won a national title since 1990, but this could be their year.

The No. 3 seed who has everyone's attention around these parts is our beloved Tennessee Vols. Just how far can UT advance?

I think anything other than a berth in the Sweet 16 will be a disappointment for a Vol squad peaking at just the right time. UT matches up well against No. 2 seed Cincinnati, which competes in the American Athletic Conference. The Bearcats haven't been tested by SEC-caliber teams on a game-to-game basis.

The Vols have a solid shot to emerge from the South Region, especially considering defensive-minded and No. 1 seed Virginia has never reached a Final Four under coach Tony Bennett.

As for my Final Four picks, I say No. 1 seed Villanova is as close to a lock as you can get. I say the other three teams will be North Carolina, Michigan State and Virginia.

WCMS wins third straight

Lady Pioneers dominate South

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

Victory seemed like nothing more than a formality for the WCMS Lady Pioneers Monday. The only question was how much did Warren County want to win by?

The WCMS softball team used an 11-run first inning to down Franklin South 14-2, its third straight victory and fifth in six games to start the season.

The Lady Pioneers went through their entire lineup in the first inning without a blemish, with 11 straight reaching and scoring before Franklin South was able to record an out.

Madison Hollis started the scoring with a double, which brought in Shelby Roberts after she was hit by a pitch to start the inning. Juju Pyburn and Aleya Esparza followed with back-to-back RBI singles. Warren County scored three more runs on passed balls, then Bella Cantrell made it 7-0 on a bunt single to score Mea Starkey.

Roberts came back to the plate for the second time and reached on a bunt single that brought in Cantrell. Back-to-back walks turned into two more runs, again by passed balls, to make it 11-0.

Continued on 3B

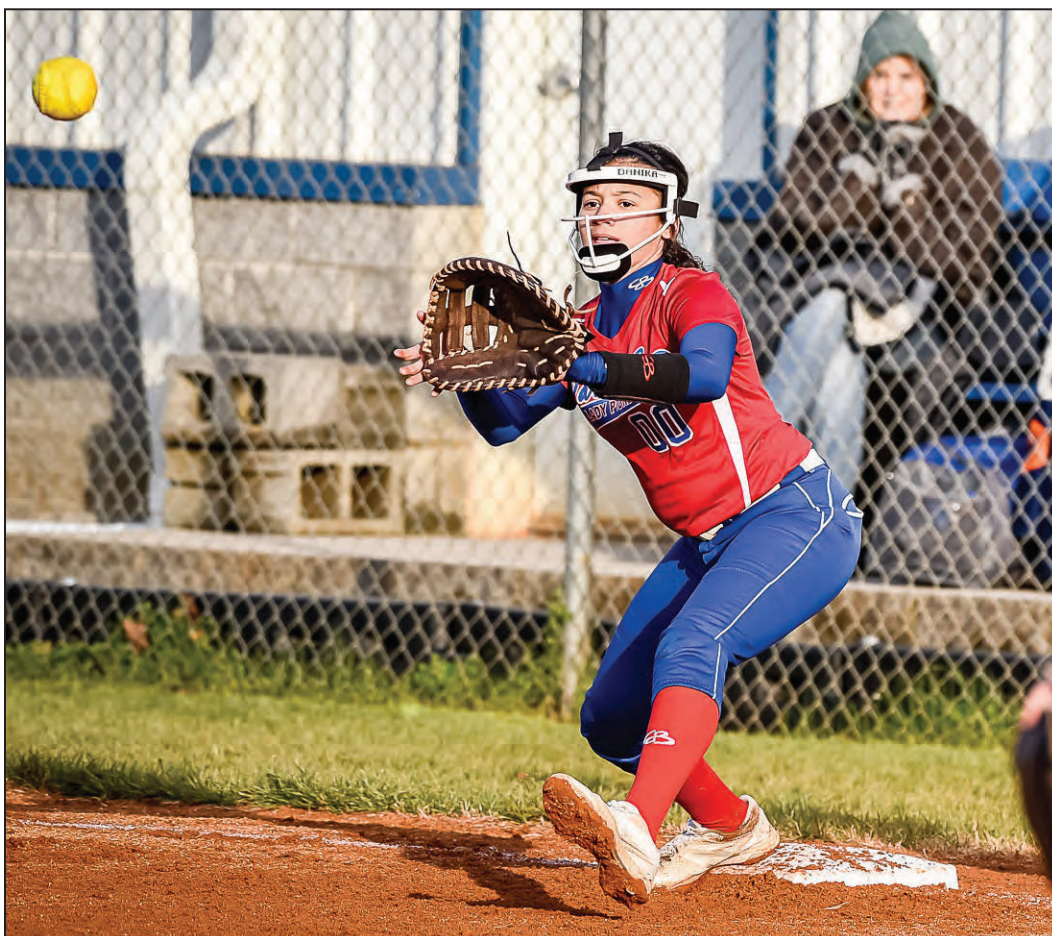


Photo courtesy of Painted Barn Media
Danika Reno stretches for an out during Monday's WCMS softball game. The Lady Pioneers downed Franklin South 14-2 in four innings.



Jacob Dodd photo
Emily Mikkola had two hits in Monday's comeback win for the Lady Pioneers. The WCHS softball team scored six runs in the top of the seventh to beat Shelbyville 9-8 in its season opener.

Cardiac kids

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

Just like school Monday, the Lady Pioneers seemed a little delayed. Luckily, the Warren County High School softball team snapped out of a slumber just in time.

In their season opener, the Lady Pioneers rallied with six runs in the top of the seventh to beat Shelbyville 9-8 Monday night.

"The bats finally came alive," said coach Gooby Martin. "This is a very talented and versatile team. We will only get better."

Trailing 8-3 entering the final inning, Grace Rains got the rally started with a double, her lone hit serving as a huge spark. Hailey Wood and Emily Mikkola came up with back-to-back singles to load the bases, setting the plate for power hitter Ashton Whiles.

The junior lofted a shot into center and a bobble proved to a big boot for the Lady Pioneers. Rains scored, while the bases remained juiced for clean-up hitter Hope Mullican. The senior swiftly fell behind 0-2 before roping a double into left field that scored Wood and Mikkola to make it 8-6.

Continued on 2B

WCHS baseball home debut delayed

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

Fans will have to wait 48 more hours before seeing the Warren County High School baseball team take Patrick Ramsey Field. The Pioneers were scheduled to open their season with a home

game against Stone Memorial Monday, but weather conditions forced the game to be postponed.

The game will now be played Wednesday and will begin at 5:30 p.m.

The Pioneers will have a new look this season, with new coach Trice Powers taking over the

program after a 20-win season and run to the region tournament. Warren County is expected again to contend for the District 6AAA title, one the program last won in 2014.

With the postponement, Warren County started its season on the road Tuesday night. The Pioneers made the short

trip to Sparta to take on the White County Warriors. Results were unavailable at press time.

For more information on the season opener, check the *Standard* sports Twitter page @sstandardsports. Coverage of the season opener and home opener will also be available in Friday's *Standard*.



**MOVIES
IN THE
PARK**

DESPICABLE ME 3

March 31st @ 7:45 pm

Cat Walker Field

* If weather is too cold or wet,
movie will be shown inside the Civic Center

500 Garfield Street | McMinnville Civic Center | 931-473-1212

**Admission
FREE**

