

Lady Pioneers fall to Franklin North

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

Any other field and Mea Starkey makes the catch. But on a short porch in Franklin North, Ashtyn Danley measured it out to perfection to give Franklin North a regular-season championship.

Danley's solo shot in extra innings Tuesday gave the Lady Gators a 4-3 victory over the Warren County Middle School softball team in what was a de facto title game between the pair of one-loss CTC rivals.

"Mea tracked the ball perfectly, ran through the temporary fence and the ball tipped off her glove as she went over the fence and hit the ground," said WCMS coach Joe Damon. "If that ball is on our field, at 220 feet instead of the 175 feet there, Mea catches it 10 out of 10 times.

"You always hear there are players who will run through a wall for you. We actually have it. We have a team full of them, Mea is just the latest example."

Starkey nearly made a web gem for the ages for the Lady Pioneers, who needed the victory to claim the regular season title and the top seed in next week's CTC tournament. Instead, Danley's deep shot pushed the Lady Gators over in a game Damon won't soon forget.

"It was the best middle school game I've ever seen. They have a good team and good pitcher (Danley)," said Damon. "It was a game of inches and it just didn't go our way. We definitely didn't give them the game. They gave 100 percent and I'm very proud of the way our girls played."

The loss snapped an 11-game winning streak for Warren County, dropping the team to 13-2 overall this season. It was a bitter defeat for the Lady Pioneers, who led 3-2 going into the fifth inning before the Lady Gators ral-

lied to win.

Warren County jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the second, getting a two-run double from Aleya Esparza to plate Marli McBride and Halo Armstrong. Esparza was able to score late in the inning when Bella Cantrell swiped second and the throw sailed into center-field.

Danley, a seventh-grader already committed to Florida State University, settled down after allowing the Lady Pioneers to jump into the lead. She allowed just one hit over the last four innings – a single from Esparza – as Warren County struggled to score off the dominant lefty.

The Lady Gators struck back in the third, getting back-to-back RBI doubles off Madison Hollis to draw within one at 3-2.

Warren County held the advantage into the fifth, where it got within one out of claiming the title. With two on and two outs, Franklin North got a gift as a Lady Pioneer error brought in the tying run.

Hollis was able to battle out of a bases-loaded jam to prolong the game, only to see Danley take over.

Danley struck out the side in the sixth, part of a nine-strikeout outing, before providing the heroics with her bat.

Just a day after shutting out the Lady Gators, Hollis took her first loss, giving up four runs on eight hits while striking out five. Esparza spearheaded the Lady Pioneer offense, with her two hits and two RBIs providing most of the damage. Armstrong and Shelby Roberts were the only other Lady Pioneers to get a hit.

Damon expects to see Franklin North again, provided his team can take care of business in the early rounds on next week's CTC tournament.

"We will see North again next week and there's no doubt it'll be a great game," said Damon.

Details of the CTC tournament sched-



Jeffery Simmons photo
Aleya Esparza, seen in a previous game, had two hits and two RBIs in Tuesday's 4-3 loss in extra innings to Franklin North. The loss dropped Warren County Middle School into the second seed in next week's CTC tournament.

SPORTS BRIEFS

CO-ED SOFTBALL LEAGUE

Registration for a 7-3 co-ed softball league at McMinnville Civic Center is currently open. The league is set to start in late April and will be played on Wednesday nights. Roster forms are available at McMinnville Civic Center on Monday thru Thursday from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. The fee is \$400. Rosters and entry fees must be turned in by April 23.

For more information, contact Terry Beard at 473-1212.

KICKBALL LEAGUE

Registration is open for the McMinnville adult co-ed kickball league. Games will be played on Mondays and Thursdays starting in May. Entry fee is \$200. Roster forms are available at McMinnville Civic Center Monday thru Thursday from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Rosters and entry fees are due by April 27.

For more information, contact Terry Beard at 473-1212.

COUNTRY CLUB SCRAMBLES

McMinnville Country Club will hold Tuesday scrambles starting April 24. Scrambles begin at 5 p.m. and are open to the public. Players must be 18 or older. For more information, call the Country Club pro shop at 668-4143.

SUBMIT A SPORTS BRIEF

If you would like to run a sports brief, bring in a typed copy to the Southern Standard sports desk or email the information to sports@southernstandard.com. Sports Briefs runs as space allows and begin two weeks before the event.

Locke signing

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This school year, Locke already finished in the top 10 percent of runners in the state cross tournament competition in November and has won every 1600 race he's competed in this spring.

Locke is hopeful he'll be back at the state tournament in a month, this time making it on the podium.

"I think I can qualify again this year. I've had a pretty good season thus far," said Locke.

Locke has ramped up training after suffering a

minor injury. Locke traditionally runs 70-80 miles a week, but has been limited to 50 miles during his current workouts. Locke runs during practice, stays extra for additional training and then runs more when he gets home.

"It takes dedication and hard work," said Locke. "I love to run and I get out and do it every chance I get."

His skill landed him an offer to Berea College, one Locke was quick to accept.

The school had one big selling point that stuck out to the senior standout.

"It's free," said Locke laughing. "But really, I think it's a great fit because they have a great program and a good coach. I'm excited about going to Berea."

Locke expects to keep running in the 800, 1500 and 1600 at the next level. He, along with the rest of the WCHS track team, will be in action this weekend at the Tomahawk team championships at Riverdale.



File photo
Christian Locke has been a standout for the Pioneers on both the track and cross country teams. Locke has run in three state meets, including last November in the cross country state final. Locke signed Wednesday to attend Berea College on a track scholarship.

Puzzlemania

PUZZLES ON PAGE 7A

CELEBRITY CIPHER

"I never knifed anybody in the back ... that is why I was so surprised that I made it in show business at all." — Jim Nabors

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APRIL 28, 2018



Priscilla Shirer Simulcast

Hosted by
First Baptist Church McMinnville
403 N.Sprng St

Saturday, April 28th 8:30AM-4:30PM
Tickets \$15 with Lunch or \$10 without lunch

Deadline to sign-up in Monday April 23rd
Call 931-473-4416 or stop by the church for your tickets and more info
Childcare provided with \$3 per child registration