

SIMMONS SAYS

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Tourney time for WCHS

We're number two! We're number two!

It's not exactly as catchy as being No. 1. It even flies in the face of Ricky Bobby's mantra, "If you ain't first, you're last."

With all due respect to the best driver to race for Wonder Bread, this week may be one of the few times it would be OK for Warren County teams to finish second.

District 6AAA tournaments will be cranking up (or in the Lady Pioneers' case, continuing). While it stands to reason coaches Gooby Martin, Trice Powers and Matt Jackson aren't lecturing their teams on the joys of finishing second, they know it's the bar they have to clear.

It's all about surviving and advancing this time of year. Teams are going to do whatever it takes to make sure the expiration date doesn't come too quick.

Martin and the Lady Pioneers already have made a solid step toward finishing in the top two in the district tournament, which guarantees a spot in the region tournament. Warren County bounced back from an 8-4 loss Wednesday - one which dropped the Lady Pioneers into a three-way tie for the district title - to beat Rhea County 9-1 Friday.

With one more win Tuesday, the Lady Pioneers would punch their ticket to the region tournament for the second straight year. Two wins and the Lady Pioneers make history - they'd hold the first home region game for the program.

It's doable, especially if Ashton Whiles keeps pitching like she did Friday and the Lady Pioneer lineup keeps cranking out hits.

Likewise, coach Powers has his Pioneer baseball team positioned to contend for the title. Warren County embarks on a three-game series with White County Monday, owners of an eight-game district winning streak.

Throwing Tyler Hollingsworth has pretty much been the formula for one win all season for the Pioneers, while Jack Keele, Brooks Helton and Dylan Ward are all capable of toeing the rubber for Powers. If the Pioneers get past the Warriors, they'd enter a one-game playoff for the right to bring the region back to Patrick Ramsey Field.

The soccer team may enter the tournament as an underdog, but James Jackson gives the Pioneers a chance every time they take the field. Warren County opens against Rhea County, a team it split with in the regular season. Don't count out the Pioneers making a tourney run, especially if Jackson heats up.

There's a dream where Warren County has three fields within 100 yards of each other lit up for region games.

This week, the dream could become a reality.

Lady Pioneers pass first test



Jeffery Simmons photo

Freshman Rhealee Johnson was 3-for-4 with three RBIs, helping the Lady Pioneers top Rhea County 9-1 in the opening round of the District 6AAA tournament.

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

There was no pep talk needed. New strategies didn't need to be pursued. Examining the X's and O's was pointless.

Lady Pioneer coach Gooby Martin just wanted his team to do the basics and everything else would work out. It turns out he was right.

The Lady Pioneers opened District 6AAA tournament play Friday with a resounding 9-1 win over Rhea County, the team which knocked Warren County out of sole possession of the regular season title just two nights before.

"We hit the ball, Ashton (Whiles) threw it well and we played good defense," said Martin. "When we do those three things, we're a really good team."

Freshman Rhealee Johnson made a huge impact in her first tournament game, going 3-for-4 with two doubles and three RBIs to fuel the Lady Pioneer offense.

Continued on 2B

WCHS track sets school records

It was as if coach Tom Moore could sense it coming. Right when the Warren County High School track team arrived at Rhea County Thursday, the head coach thought records would be broken.

"I had a feeling our seniors would have a great day," said Moore. "This group has been improving each week and it was time to perform."

Three seniors decided to steal the show at the sectionals while competing against 20 of the top teams in Class AAA.

Bethany Fye and Jayren Perkins each left the event with new school records, while Christian Locke left with sectional bids in two events.

Fye showed her versatility, competing in the shot put, triple jump, 200-meter race and running a leg for the 4x200 relay team. Fye excelled in the triple jump, topping her previous school record with a leap of 33 feet, two inches. It was enough for second

and a bid into the sectionals this Saturday, May 12 at Oakland.

"Bethany is a pleasure to coach. She's an outstanding athlete and competes every time out," said Moore.

Perkins shocked even his most loyal supporters when he stole the show at the long jump. Perkins, whose previous best was 5'10", set the school record with a leap of 6'4". It was good enough for second, though his coach thought it was performance that was second to none.

"Jayron's performance was one of the best I've seen by a Warren County athlete since I've been here," said Moore.

Locke qualified for the sectionals in both the 800 and 1,600 meters. Locke placed third in the 1,600 - his signature event - with a time of 4:37.67.

Motivated by his loss in the 1,600, Locke dusted the competition in the 800, with his 1:59.00 time topping the 36-runner field by three seconds.

Eye on the ball



Jeffery Simmons photo

Dante Elam works on punt returns during Friday's practice. The Pioneers start week two of spring practice Monday.



Jeffery Simmons photo

Jordan Ruiz takes a free kick during Thursday's 2-1 loss to Ooltewah. The Pioneers begin district tournament play Tuesday at Rhea County.

Rough week

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
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(McMinnville, Tennessee)

It wasn't the ideal way coach Matt Jackson wanted his Pioneers to enter postseason.

The Warren County High School soccer team dropped its final two games of the regular season, falling 2-1 at home Thursday to Ooltewah after dropping an OT decision in Soddy Daisy Tuesday.

Warren County lost on penalty kicks 4-3 to the Trojans, the second of three games during a busy week. Coach Jackson felt like fatigue played a part in Thursday's loss at home.

"I think we looked tired in the second half against Ooltewah," said Jackson. "We rotated quite a bit against Soddy Daisy. We've been trying to get ready for the tournament."

Neither loss impacted the Pioneers' seeding in the tournament. Before play started against Soddy Daisy, Warren County already knew it would be traveling to Rhea County for its opening game.

After splitting with the Eagles this season, Jackson is optimistic his team is ready to turn the page and start postseason play.

"They have the turf field there and it plays fast. Fortunately, we will have four days rest to get ready," said Jackson.

Tuesday's tournament game is set to start at 6 p.m.

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