

SIMMONS SAYS

**JEFFERY
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Struggles continue for Vols

It's going to be a long season.

That's all I could think as my family and I walked away from Bank of America Stadium Saturday in Charlotte, aimlessly in search of pride in being Vols fans . . . and an Uber.

Expectations weren't high, at least mine weren't. Rewinding back just a week ago, here are a few snippets of my thoughts going into a matchup with nationally ranked West Virginia.

"I don't expect the Vols to win. I'm not really sure it will even be close. . . I just hope to see some semblance of improvement, which shouldn't be hard considering the Vols were historically inept last fall."

And yet, the Tennessee season started with the center missing a block on a simple screen pass and quarterback Jarrett Guarantano being hit while trying to release on a one-step drop. The ball bounced backward and the Vols took a 10-yard loss.

Going backwards. It should be the new motto of the Tennessee program.

The 40-14 loss to the Mountaineers wasn't devoid of good moments.

The Vols put together a time-killing scoring drive in the second quarter to momentarily seize momentum, capitalizing on new coach Jeremy Pruitt's aggression to go for a touchdown on fourth down. Guarantano rolled out and found TE Dominick Wood-Anderson alone in the end-zone, trimming the West Virginia lead to 10-7.

Guarantano himself had a decent stat line, completing 19-of-25 and guiding a Vol offense which prioritized ball safety, finishing with zero turnovers. New tailback Tim Jordan was a bulldozer at times, finishing with 118 yards.

Defensively, there wasn't much to praise. Local fans did get a chance to see Manchester product Alontae Taylor start at cornerback. To my knowledge, he wasn't in direct coverage on any of Will Grier's five touchdowns, although the first score did go to his side and he looked a step late in undercutting the route.

We left to a John Denver "Country Roads" sing-along, which sounded awesome even though I didn't feel like it was a place I belonged at the time.

As we stopped and our ride neared on a packed Charlotte street, one guy walked past my dad – a sulen 60-year-old Vol fan who has had season tickets since 1986 and been watching and attending games since way before – and said, "Don't worry, it's going to get better."

My dad never even looked up. He only muttered, "Yeah, we've been saying that for 10 years."

Our driver pulled up and asked, "Where are you headed?"

Tennessee fans have been wondering that for a long time.

Learning experience



Senior Hailey Wood led the Lady Pioneers offensively during an eight-game trek through the Chattanooga Choo Choo tournament. Wood finished with a team-high 68 assists as Warren County went 3-5 on the trip.

Jeffery Simmons photo

Tourney tests Lady Pioneers

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

The Chattanooga Choo Choo tournament has become a road map for the Warren County High School volleyball team. Play well and the Lady Pioneers surge down the stretch. Struggles seem to carry over.

Coming out of the weekend, coach Katie Rogers believes her team has found the right path.

"The weekend was a great learning experience for the girls," said Rogers, who has been taking part in the tournament for 10 years as a player and coach. "I was extremely impressed with the way we played. We played some really tough teams."

"I was impressed with the maturity of their play and how much they grew up over the weekend."

Warren County advanced to the semifinals of the silver division, ultimately ending play with a loss to Silverdale. It concluded an action-packed weekend where the team played eight matches over two days, finishing 3-5.

"The team as a whole played like they had nothing to lose and we saw good results come from it," said Rogers. "We just have to learn to carry that mentality over to district games. If we can do that, we will be able to get the district wins we need."

Warren County (8-10) started the weekend with losses Friday to Rhea County (2-1) and Sale Creek (2-0) before bouncing back to topple Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences (2-1).

The Lady Pioneers carried that momentum into a win Saturday morning over Signal Mountain (2-0), though losses followed against Sullivan Central (2-0) and Silverdale (2-1).

Warren County stayed alive in the tournament portion by again beating CSAS before Silverdale, the 15-3 private school located in Chattanooga, proved too tough in the semis. Silverdale went on to beat Sullivan Central to earn the silver bracket championship.

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Haywood running wild for Pioneers

BY **JEFFERY SIMMONS**
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Eric Haywood isn't just running past defenders. He's racing up the Pioneer record book.

Warren County's offensive star through three games has been its senior tailback. Haywood has topped 100 yards in each of the team's first three games, matching Raleigh Woods' start in 2016 for the most times hitting the century mark to begin a campaign since Tom Moore took over in 2014.

Haywood is a much different runner than Woods, a 230-pound bruiser who was injured in the third game and didn't get a chance to pad his numbers the rest of the year. Haywood has shown the ability to be a home-run threat, already scoring on an 85-yard run against DeKalb County to go along with longs of 41 yards in a win at Sparta and a 55-yard gallop in Cookeville.

Continued on 2B



Eric Haywood has been a bright spot for the Pioneers this fall. The senior running back has eclipsed 100 yards in the first three games, just the third Warren County runner to accomplish the feat in the last decade.

Jeffery Simmons photo



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