



DANNY VAUGHN

Pineville outfielder Jaycee Caldwell headed to first base during the Lady Lions' win over Middlesboro. Caldwell had a double in an 8-5 victory that evened their record at 2-2.

PREP SOFTBALL

Lady Lions defeat Williamsburg, Middlesboro to even record

Staff Report

After opening the season with two losses, the Pineville Lady Lions bounced back with two wins this week with a 13-1 rout of Williamsburg on Monday and an 8-5 victory over Middlesboro on Wednesday.

Rachel Howard pitched a four-hitter against Williamsburg with 15 strikeouts and no walks. She also led Pineville at the plate with three hits. Jaycee Caldwell, Rayanna Maidon, Shawna Elliott, Malley Smith, Monica Whitehead and Isabella Adams added two hits each. Hannah Abner and Kameran Evans had one hit each.

Howard gave up five unearned runs against Middlesboro on nine hits

with 13 strikeouts and one walk.

Maidon and Elliott led the Pineville offense with a double and single each. Caldwell had a double. Abner, Adams, Smith, Whitehead and Evans added one single each.

The 2-2 Lady Lions play host to Hancock County, Tenn., on Monday.

The Lady Jackets won 14-4 in five innings on Monday at Lynn Camp and beat Barbourville, 17-1 in four innings on the road Thursday. Statistics were not available for either game.

Next up is a game Monday at Clay County.

PREP SOFTBALL

Lady Cats take a 4-game winning streak into district showdown

By Bill Templeton
Middlesboro News

After recording three wins last week, the Bell County softball team is riding a wave of momentum heading into its first district game Tuesday against Middlesboro.

The Lady Cats improved their overall record to 4-1 with a week-ending 16-0, four-inning victory Friday against Hancock County, Tenn., at the Bell Central School Center. The team's fourth straight win came after edging Williamsburg 7-4 on Tuesday.

Following a come-from-behind victory Monday over Knox Central and the close win over Williamsburg, the Lady Cats collected 16 hits in their lopsided win over Hancock County, and Saylor expressed her pride in the team's progress and results through the early stages of the new season.

"The energy is high, the chemistry keeps getting better, and the girls are starting to believe in what we can do together," coach Kristan Saylor said. "I'm really proud of the way we compete from start to finish. This is a team that never gives up and can never be counted out. No matter the situation, we're going to keep battling, scratching and clawing our way until the final out. That fight and resilience is what makes



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Bell County's Adyson Scott delivered a pitch during the Lady Cats' 7-4 win over Williamsburg.

our team special. You can feel the confidence building with this group."

Junior pitcher Adyson Scott earned all three victories in the circle for the Lady Cats. Scott struck out eight Hancock County hitters and yielded just one hit. She did not walk a batter. Tuesday in the win over Williamsburg Scott recorded 11 strikeouts, yielded five hits and walked three.

Offensively against Hancock County, the Lady Cats got a monster game from eighth-grader Tristan Saylor and at least two hits from seven of the 10 Bell County starters.

Tristan Saylor finished a double short of the cycle, collecting a home run, triple and single. She was also hit by a pitch and

scored four runs.

Senior Addison Maiden also clubbed a home run and a double, while scoring two runs. Scott, Jayda Boateng, Amillya Smith, Brylee Redmond and Raeghan Moyers each had two hits, while Kyleigh Allen also collected a hit.

"It was a great team win from start to finish," Kristan Saylor said about the Hancock County game. "I'm really proud of how we came out focused, set the tone early, and stayed locked in the entire game.

"Even with the score, I thought our effort and energy never dropped, and that says a lot about this group. We had contributions up and down the lineup, and our

defense stayed sharp behind us."

In the win Tuesday over Williamsburg, the Lady Cats rallied from a 4-1 deficit by scoring two runs in the third, fourth and sixth innings.

Boateng hit a home run, a triple, drove in two runs and scored three times in the win over Williamsburg. Maiden swatted a home run and had two hits, while teammates Scott, Kenley Foster, Moyers, Allen, Smith and Redmond each collected one hit.

The first pitch for the Bell County at Middlesboro game Tuesday is scheduled for 5:30 p.m.

SIDELINES

Continued from A10

(13.9, 6.6) and junior guards Izack Saylor (10.7, 4.4), Jaxson Perry (7.3, 3.3) and Ethan Huff (5.7). Senior forward Legend Mimes (9.1, 8.3) may have been the region's most explosive player off the bench a year ago and should move into the lineup this season to provide a potent 1-2 post tandem with Noe. Junior forwards Braxton Rowe (2.6) and Eli Noe will also see significant action.

8. South Laurel (14-15) — Coach Jeff Davis stepped down after a successful 15-year run and four starters graduated, but the Cardinals can never be counted out. Junior guard Kaden Taylor (12.4) is the only starter back, but 6-6 senior forward Joe Smith could be one of the region's best players if he avoids the injuries that kept him sidelined much of last year. Junior guards Isaiah Robinson (4.8) and Brayden Cassidy (6.4, 2.3) and senior guard Brayden Laymon (2.4) should also play big roles.

9. Harlan County (19-11) — Only two years removed from a state runner-up finish, the Bears suffered through an inconsistent season that included some impressive wins and some ugly losses, including a first-round exit in the 52nd District Tournament. Led by senior guard Trenton Cole (17.9, 3.7), the Bears still have the potential to be a top five team with improvements at the other positions. Juniors Brady Smith (6.5, 3.0) and Kaden Jones (4.6) return in the backcourt, along with senior Landon Brock (4.7, 2.3), last year's sixth man. The Bears have several options in the

front court, including Tucker Curtis (3.0, 2.7), Tyhler Coots and Rydge Lewis. Junior guard Hayden Grace and freshmen guards Trey Creech and Easton Engle could also help.

10. Pineville (14-17) — After suffering massive graduation losses from a regional semifinalist squad in 2025, the Mountain Lions struggled with inconsistency through much of the regular season before putting everything together at the perfect time with upset wins over Barbourville and Knox Central to repeat as 51st District champions. Everyone returns for the Lions led by junior guard Preston Zachery (11.8) and sophomores Noah Slone (12.1, 3.0) and Anderson Gentry (11.7, 2.6) in one of the region's top young backcourts. The Lions also have size with 6-4 senior Brady Hatmaker (7.7, 5.8)

6-5 junior Jacob Grubbs (8.6, 7.7) and 6-8 junior Kenton Brock (6.8, 2.9) alternating in the post.

Best of the rest:

11. Barbourville (12-14) — The Tigers had a season of ups and downs after losing their top player, forward Eathan Fisher, to an ALC injury in the preseason. Four starters return in 2027, led by senior guard Chase Wilder (8.2, 2.7) and senior forward Trace Wood (7.0, 3.2). Sophomore forwards Noah King (7.9, 4.5) and Carter Deaton (6.8, 4.8) also return. Senior guard Ian Ross (3.0) could round out the lineup. Sophomores Landon Gross, Noah Gross and Vernon Cole will also likely see action.

12. Jackson County (21-10) — After leading the Generals to a 10-game improvement in his first and only season as leader of the Generals, Parker Stewart moves on to the

Montgomery County job. Senior guard Brennon Combs (11.5, 3.5) and junior guards Tansen Truett (9.1, 4.4) and Braxton Coyle (3.8) are back for the Generals, who could be in the mix behind Harlan as one of the All "A" contenders. Junior forward Wyatt Gay (9.7, 3.9), at 6-4, could take over a spot in the post.

13. Oneida Baptist (12-15) — The Mountaineers fell in the final seconds to Middlesboro in last year's All "A" Classic semifinals and could make a deeper run this year with 6-7 senior forward Tommy Bransutter (15.7, 12.1) and junior guard Skyler Roberts (16.4, 2.9) returning, along with sophomore guard Aden Gregory (10.8, 2.3). Senior forward Cedar Tive (2.6, 2.4) and junior forwards Ryder Salmons and Mason Lockhart should play bigger roles.

14. Middlesboro (12-

17) — The Jackets and second-year coach Eddie Gilbert will have to replace six of their top nine players from a squad that started strong a year ago but fell short of ending a string of losing seasons. Senior guard Bryson Brooks (13.5, 4.1) was the Jackets' second leading scorer last season and returns along with junior guard Jacob Tinnell (5.5, 2.2). There are several candidates to round out the lineup, including junior Ayden Allen and sophomores Caden Lawson, Parker Hampton, John Hayes and Emmitt Butler (3.0).

15. Lynn Camp (8-22) — With six of their top eight players returning, the Wildcats appear to be in position for improvement. Seniors returning include guards Eisen Mayo (6.7, .24) and Elijah Mayo (3.1) and 6-2 forward Landen Rose (17.2, 6.2). Sophomore guard Cason Mills

(3.0) and junior forward Kayden Powers (2.5, 3.2) could round out the lineup.

16. Williamsburg (1-27) — The Jackets struggled mightily after being wiped out by graduation and have a slow road ahead of them in rebuilding. Junior guard Reece Hatcher (15.2, 3.6) and junior guards Lane Jeffries (11.8, .23) and T.J. Cornett (5.6, 3.9) returning starters. Junior guard Andy Shelton (5.2, 3.3) and senior guard Mason Rountree (3.2) should also play key roles.

17. Red Bird (6-16) — The Cardinals posted their most wins in six years this season and could continue to build with senior guard Collin Xavier Roark (19.5, 2.8) and 6-2 junior center Ashton Lewis (10.7, 8.5) back, along with senior guard Isaac Mandela and junior forward Abenezer Dukamo (2.6, 4.6).

This Easter, we are reminded of the promise of everlasting life, the power of faith, and the comfort of God's unfailing love.

In moments of loss, may you find peace in His presence... strength in His promises... and hope in the resurrection.

Though we may grieve, we do not grieve without hope. For through Him, love never ends and life is made eternal.

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."
— Psalm 34:18

May this sacred season bring you comfort, renewal, and the quiet assurance that you are never alone.

Wishing you and your family a peaceful and blessed Easter.

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