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ASHEBORO - To be playing their best come postseason time is the goal of all high school coaches in every sport. Uwharrie Charter Academy baseball coach Rob Shore has seen that come to fruition.

The Eagles, who have won 13 of their past 14 games, advanced to the West Regional Championship Series after four victories in the NCHSAA state 1-A tournament.

Awaiting the Eagles is a familiar foe as Eastern Randolph has advanced to the regional finals from its side of the bracket. The best-of-three series will begin Tuesday night at Scott Rush Park and then head to ERHS for Game 2 on Thursday. Game 3 is tentatively scheduled for Saturday afternoon at UCA.

After starting the season 1-4, 2-5 and then 4-8, the Eagles have flown high, finishing with an 8-4 record inside the Piedmont Athletic Conference, which was good enough for a tie for second with Trinity behind Randleman.

Shore, who was an assistant coach last season, is in his first year as head coach for the Eagles.



"It was a tough early season schedule and I think that probably had a lot to do with it," Shore said of the early-season struggles. "It was me trying to figure out the lineup, pitching rotations and them trying to pick up on the mental parts of the game that I preach. At no point did I feel there was any type of special formula to figure it out. It just took these guys some time to figure it out."

The second-seeded Eagles (18-10) advanced to the West Regional Championship Series with a 12-0 win over No 31 Queens Grant, an 11-4 win over No. 18 Bishop McGuinness, an 11-4 victory over No. 10 North Stokes and a thrilling 5-4 eight-inning win over No. 3 Draughn. North Stokes and Draughn finished with a combined 45-11 record.

"I don't feel we had our best game Friday, but we did just enough," Shore said. "We're making big plays at the right time and scoring runs early. The guys have been playing well."

In that game Friday night, the Eagles were outhit 11-7, but Carter Brown singled in Logun Wilkins with two outs in the bottom of the eighth. The first three rounds weren't as difficult.

"I knew we had it in us to be here," Shore said of reaching the regional finals. "I think developing the pitching was something that has really excelled over the last month and a half."

Freshman Jake Hunter and sophomore Brett Smith have led the charge on the mound.

"The first half of the season, Brett was my Tuesday starter," Shore said. "Brett was pitching great but wasn't getting any run support. During spring break, I switched them and it seemed like both started getting run support. That worked for us."



In the Wildcats, Shore said he knows his team will once again be tested. During the regular season, UCA edged ER 3-0 and 4-3..

"Whenever you play a familiar foe at any point in the playoffs, it's a little bit extra from the mental part of it," Shore said. "Now we're playing someone from our league with a chance to go to the state championship."