

Lady Rocket duo makes college pick

Warner, Wales headed to Motlow for softball

By Chris Siers
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Parker Wales and Carli Warner have been staples of the Forrest Lady Rocket softball program for several years.

From their earliest time in youth leagues and middle school, through their state championship runs at the high school level, the two have become leaders on and off the field.

That combination of talent, drive and determination helped land the pair a spot at playing at the next level.

Last week, the Lady Rocket duo both signed their letters of intent to continue their softball careers at Motlow State Community College.

"In our program, it kind of starts when they're young. We start having a hand in it in middle school—we say we're Forrest softball. Starting in seventh grade, they're getting to work out beside seniors," Lady Rocket coach Shelby Lightfoot said.

"Having two signing to the same place is awesome. It's a big accomplishment."

Both Wales and Warner have become key

leaders on the field with their consistent, outstanding level of play, from Warner becoming a reliable power hitter, to Wales' efforts behind the plate and managing the Lady Rocket pitching staff.

"Parker Wales is behind the plate for us and has been a phenomenal catcher. For the past two years, she's been agile and quick behind the plate. She's kind of a silent leader that doesn't speak up a lot, but when she does, her voice is heard," Lightfoot said.

"Carli is our clutch hitter. She comes in when you need some momentum or a timely hit or something to happen. She was really big for us last year in the state tournament and also the year before. Although they're different in styles, they balance each other very well," Lightfoot added.

From their youngest days stepping on the field, to last week's signing, the journey has been a culmination of drive and determination that certainly paid dividends for the pair from countless hours of work.

"It's kind of surreal because I never thought I would make it this far, even though it was my



Carli Warner and Parker Wales signed their letters of intent to continue their softball careers at Motlow State Community College.

Tribune Photo by Chris Siers

goal. It just seems so unreal to be able to go somewhere and play at the next level," Wales said.

"I started when I was three and just played tee ball. I started playing travel ball when I was around 12 and that's when it picked up," she added.

Warner echoed Wales' sentiments when recalling the many years of work she's put into the

sport and Lady Rocket program.

"This is something I've worked for my whole life. I've known ever since I was eight years old playing on that field that I've wanted to go play at the next level. It's so relieving that I've taken all the chances I can and have achieved this opportunity," she said.

Having played in the state championship in

the past two years, the pair have been part of a community that has embraced the winning tradition of the Lady Rocket program and bringing home the state championship in 2021 and finishing runner-up in 2022.

Throughout all the memories she's had playing softball, being part of the state championship team was among Wales' favorite.

"Definitely the state championship. Probably my favorite was after the state championship, the bus ride home was so fun. We just danced and listened to music. It was so fun," she said.

Warner agreed on a broader scale that being part of the community that's so supportive of their play on the field and being able to look

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Bulldogs' deliver late, down Rockets in county clash

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CHAPEL HILL — It was certainly no offensive masterpiece by either Cornersville or Forrest in the Battle of North and South in Marshall County on Friday night, but in the end, the Bulldogs were able to withstand several momentum shifts and make key baskets in the final minutes to escape Chapel Hill with a 34-32 win over the Rockets.

"It was a defensive battle for sure. My kids didn't quit and they kept fighting. I told them in the locker room, I'm proud of the fact when we gave up a lead, they (Forrest) got it late, but we came back and fought hard and never quit. That's what makes me the most proud tonight," Bulldog coach Dakota Brown said.

The two squads locked the score three times in the fourth quarter before Mason Harper hit a pair of free throws with 1:47 left to give the Rockets a 32-31 lead.

That lead didn't hold long as Carter Neat drew a foul with 57 seconds left on the clock and hit both attempts of a one-and-one try to put Cornersville back up, 33-32.

After Forrest missed the front end of a one-and-one attempt with 30 seconds to go, Cornersville's Hayden Grover hauled in a rebound off a Rocket miss and was fouled, once again earning a trip to the free throw line.

After missing the front end of the double bonus attempt, Grover hit the second shot to make it a two-point



Gage Lovell sets up the Bulldogs' offense in the half-court against Forrest on Friday night.

Tribune Photos by Chris Siers



Davon Porter powers his way to the rim and goes up for two for Forrest.

game.

That score held as the Rockets couldn't come up with the needed shot in the clutch and

the Bulldogs escaped with the two-point win.

"Kudos to Cornersville. They had a good See **Bulldogs**, Page 2B

Big 3rd lifts Cornersville past Forrest

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CHAPEL HILL — Even with the offense becoming a struggle at times in the first half, Lady Rocket coach Hal Murrell felt like his squad was well-within striking distance of the nine-point Cornersville lead at halftime.

But in the end, the Lady 'Dawgs rattled loose for 18 in the third quarter and coasted to a 42-23 win over Forrest on Friday night.

For Cornersville, the Lady Bulldogs were able to limit Forrest to single digits in all four quarters played—a point of emphasis for Lady 'Dawg coach Hayden McMahon during recent practices.

"That's what we've been practicing the last week—defense, close outs, ball pressure, man-to-man, whatever it is, we preach defense," he said.

"If we have a night when we can't score, we have to rely on the defense. That's why we practice defense so much."

While Kinslee Inlow has been a source of offense for the Lady Rockets throughout much of her career, Cornersville marked her early on and didn't allow many uncontested shots by the Forrest sharpshooter.

"She's going to have to constantly be moving without the basketball, learn how to run off screens and learn how to catch and shoot," Murrell said.

While the offense was a struggle for Forrest, two other points stood out to Murrell during Friday night.

"We struggled to score, which has been a recurring theme for



Alicia Polk flies in for a basket. She led all scorers with 17 points on Friday night.

Tribune Photos by Chris Siers



Megan Mealer goes up strong for a two-pointer against the Lady 'Dawgs.

us this year. The biggest thing for me was our turnovers and inability to get offensive rebounds," he said.

Still, senior Macyn Kirby did what she could to manage the

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