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Lady Indians win two of three, finish third in Battle of the States

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The Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Basketball Team participated in the eighteenth annual Battle of the States Basketball Tournament last week in the Towns County Gym. They rallied past Polk County (Tennessee) in the opening round on Tuesday and led all the way in taking a tough win over Dawson County in the final round on Thursday. In between, however, they fell in a very competitive game to eventual tournament champion Gordon Lee in the semi finals on Wednesday, resulting in a third place finish in the tournament.

The week's work leaves the Lady Indians with an overall record of 9-4 and a Region 8A record of 2-0 as primarily region games remain on the 2012 portion of their schedule. The four losses have been at the hands of three teams with a combined record of 35-3—Rabun County (13-0), Gordon Lee (12-1), and Union County (10-2)—with one of Union's losses being to the Lady Indians and the other by a 49-38 score to Gordon Lee in the championship game in the Battle of the States.

The Lady Indians return to action this weekend when they host Region 8A foe Commerce on Friday night and Class A state ranked Holy Innocents' of Atlanta on Saturday. The Holy Innocents' game will begin at 5:00 pm following a Lady Indians JV game scheduled for 3:00 pm. There will be no boys games on Saturday as the Indians have two extra region contests against Riverside Military Academy.

LADY INDIANS VERSUS POLK COUNTY

Most of the first half of the opening game in the Battle of the States for the Lady Indians proved to be a struggle just as was evident for other teams in the tournament after long layoffs with perhaps the most striking example being the Union County Lady Panthers. Those who saw the Lady Indians and Lady Panthers in the most recent prior game for each, against each other in the Union County game ten days earlier; will recall the Lady Panthers sinking six straight 3-point baskets in building a 24-14 first quarter lead. In their opening game against Hokes Bluff (Alabama), the Lady Panthers scored exactly two points and trailed 11-2 after one quarter before using a 21-4 second quarter to advantage in taking a 42-32 victory. The Lady Indians, on the other hand, managed just an early Lindsay Patton basket and another by Ali Bleckley near the mid point of the first quarter for a 4-0 lead over Polk County (Tennessee) before finishing the quarter with an 11-4 run for a 14-8 lead. Gabby Arencebica got the run started with a trey at the 3:13 mark and Eryn Cochran finished it with the final five points which were actually scored in just fifty four seconds, ending at the 1:07 mark.

That late run turned out to be a temporary tease, however, as Polk County outscored the Lady Indians 14-4 in the second quarter for a 22-18 lead and opened the third with a 6-2 run for a 28-20 lead by the 5:36 mark. The Lady Indians came alive after that for actually two rallies during the remainder of the quarter. An 8-2 run highlighted by four free throw shooting by Stephanie Patton got the Lady Indians within 30-28 only to see Polk respond with a pair of treys for a 36-28 lead by the

1:38 mark. A Cochran put back basket, two Arencebica free throws and a basket by Bleckley tied the final 1:26 again had the Lady Indians knocking on the door, trailing by just a 36-34 score, entering the fourth quarter.

With the Wildkittens holding a 38-35 lead, Arencebica, who is known for her deadly 3-point shooting, took charge of the game for the Lady Indians, taking the ball to the basket on this occasion, including a steal in striking for six straight points between the 6:46 and 6:18 marks for a 41-38 Towns lead. After Polk tied the score on a traditional three point play, Lindsay Patton got the Lady Indians back ahead 43-41, for good as it turned out, at 5:06 on an assist by Arencebica.

Arencebica wasn't through, however, as she included four for four free throw shooting among six additional points for a 49-45 Lady Indian lead with 2:13 on the clock, giving her twelve points in an overall 14-7 Lady Indian run. The scoring pace slowed after that with Kelsie Cowart giving the Lady Indians vital insurance with a field goal and a free throw in the final thirty six seconds of the game as they took a tough 52-48 victory, sending them into a semi finals match up with Gordon Lee.

Arencebica led the Lady Indians in scoring for the game with 19 points but she had lots of help with other leaders being Cochran and Lindsay Patton with 8 each, Cowart with 7, and Bleckley with 6. Arencebica also took the lead in assists with 4 with Bleckley close behind with 3, according to your reporter's unofficial tally. The Polk County Ladies went on to finish fifth in the tournament by taking victories by nearly identical scores of 52-43 over Hayesville and 54-43 over Hokes Bluff (Alabama).

LADY INDIANS VERSUS GORDON LEE

The semi final Battle of the States match up on Wednesday was a familiar one with the two finalists in last year's tournament vying for a trip to the finals this year. The two teams had split two prior encounters, on both occasions in the Battle of the States, with the Lady Indians taking a 62-51 victory in the third place game in 2007 and the Lady Trojans using a 62-48 victory in taking the 2010 championship back to Chickamauga.

The Lady Trojans entered the game with a 10-1 record with the loss on opening night having been to Class AAAAA Kennesaw Mountain. The first half of the game was a classic battle after the Lady Dragons seemed to have the upper hand in the opening minutes. The Lady Indians put together two rallies in the first quarter with the first coming when Eryn Cochran twice took the tall coast to coast for field goals in reducing an 8-2 Gordon Lee lead to 8-6.

The second rally answered a 14-6 Lady Dragons lead when the Lady Indians scored three points at a time in a 12-3 run between the 3:29 and 1:11 marks for a brief 18-17 lead. Gabby Arencebica got the run started with a traditional three point play which was followed by treys by Ali Bleckley, Cochran, and Arencebica but the Lady Dragons regained the lead on a late field goal following a steal for a 19-18 lead at quarter's end.

There were two ties and two lead changes the first half of the second quarter with Gordon Lee holding a 24-22 lead at that point which became 28-23



Coach Jim Melton talks it over with the Lady Indians. Photo by James Reese.



Senior Lindsay Patton accepts the BOS third place trophy for the Lady Indians. Photo by James Reese.



Eryn Cochran goes after the loose ball in tournament action. Photo by James Reese.

by the two minute mark. A trey by Bleckley at 1:55 got the Lady Indians within 28-26 but misfortune struck the Lady Indians, beginning at the 1:08 mark.

The Lady Dragons sank a 3-point basket with a not very frequently called "after the shot" foul called on the Lady Indians. Viewing the game on Ridgeline TV on tape delay revealed smooth contact on blocking out by the Lady Indians but the Gordon Lee player perhaps should receive an academy award nomination as she dropped to the floor, getting the foul call. She sank two free throws on the double bonus with a sudden seven point Lady Dragon margin of 33-26.

The five point play was compounded when the Lady Dragons followed a missed one and one free throw by the Lady Indians with a 3-point play on a put back for eight points on two plays in twenty four seconds and a 36-26 lead. The Lady Indians were able to attain some damage control, cutting the lead in half when Bleckley nailed a trey at thirty two seconds and Cochran came up with a steal and sank a miracle basket from her knees eleven seconds later for a 36-31 Gordon Lee lead at intermission.

Gordon Lee got the better of the first half of the third quarter, using a 9-1 run for a 45-32 lead and an overall 15-5 run for a 51-36 advantage by the 2:30 mark. The Lady Indians again put a dent in the Trojan lead when they finished on a 10-5 run the final 2:13 for a 56-46 deficit entering the fourth quarter. Cochran, who had included a trey and free throws earlier in the quarter, took the lead with four for four free throw shooting and a drive for two with a Stephanie Patton trey

being another highlight in that run.

The start of the fourth quarter was promising for the Lady Indians as Cochran sank two free throws for just an eight point deficit and assisted Emily Anderson on a basket for just a 58-50 deficit at 7:13 but Cochran was lost on fouls at 6:44 with Gordon Lee following with an 8-0 run for their biggest lead of 66-50 at the 4:50 mark.

The Lady Indians again rallied by finishing the game on an 11-6 run but coming up short by a 72-61 score. Highlighting the late run were six free throw shooting by Bleckley and a field goal, steal, and assist by freshman Misty Lindemuth.

Cochran scored a game high 24 points in spite of missing most of the fourth quarter with other leaders being Bleckley with 16 and Arencebica and Stephanie Patton with 6 each. Cochran also led in assists with 4 with Arencebica and Bleckley taking second honors with 2 each. The Gordon Lee trio of Livia Bradbury with 20 points, 6'4" Katelyn Lee with 15, and Cassidy Blevins with 13 provided most of the fire power for the Lady Dragons. Bradbury was selected as the Most Valuable Player in this year's tournament following their championship game win over Union County after Blevins took this honor a year ago.

LADY INDIANS VERSUS DAWSON COUNTY

The loss to Gordon Lee sent the Lady Indians into the third place game on Thursday as they faced Class AA Dawson County for the third time in less than a month and a half. The Lady Indians had taken a 76-66 victory over the Lady Tigers



Gabby Arencebica goes for the tip against Gordon Lee's Livia Bradbury. Photo by James Reese.



Ali Bleckley passes the ball to Misty Lindemuth against Polk County. Photo by James Reese.

in Dawsonville and ran away at the end for a 76-46 win at home with that potential third win over a strong team often difficult to attain. The Lady Tigers had defeated Murphy 66-48 in their opening night game but fell to fellow Region 8AA foe Union County 63-47 in the semi finals on Wednesday.

The Lady Indians seemed from the beginning to have brushed aside the disappointment of the loss to Gordon Lee by taking a 6-0 lead less than a minute and a half into the game behind two free throws by Ali Bleckley and field goals by Eryn Cochran and Kelsie Cowart. This was a lead they would never surrender but have challenged on a persistent basis throughout the game by the youthful but physically strong and very talented Lady Tigers.

Gabby Arencebica took the lead the remainder of the quarter by including a trey in a seven point performance as the Lady Indians extended a 6-4 lead to 24-11 and then 24-14 after a Dawson trey by quarter's end. Less than two minutes into the second quarter, the Lady Tigers had exerted a strong challenge with an 8-2 start but 11-2 overall back to the trey ending the first quarter for just a 26-22 Towns lead.

As would be the pattern throughout the game, however, the Lady Indians responded with a 16-5 run and a 42-27 lead which was again reduced by a late Dawson basket to 42-29 at intermission. Six different Lady Indians put points on the scoreboard in the quarter with Arencebica, Dadrion Blythe, and Cochran leading the way with four each.

With the Lady Indians holding a somewhat comfortable lead of 48-37 mid way through the

third quarter, here came the Lady Tigers again as they finished the stanza on an 8-0 run for just a 48-45 Lady Indians lead entering the fourth quarter. Once again, the Lady Indians put some distance between themselves and the visitors from Dawsonville with four for four free throw shooting by Cochran leading them out to a 56-47 lead which the Tigers once again reduced, this time to 56-52 with 2:12 left.

And once again, the Lady Indians struck with a vengeance as Cochran took the ball coast to coast for a field goal at 2:01 with two for two free throw shooting each by Bleckley, Cochran, and Arencebica following for a 64-52 lead and an eventual 68-57 victory. Cochran completed an eight for eight free throw shooting performance in the quarter, extending a remarkable free throw effort in three games this year against the Lady Tigers. She sank thirty three of thirty four attempts, including a modern school record nineteen for twenty in the first game at Dawson County followed by six for six and then eight for eight on her home court.

The Lady Indians had lots of heroics in this game with scoring leaders being all tournament selection Cochran with 18 points, Arencebica with 15, Bleckley with 13, Blythe with 8, Stephanie Patton with 7, and Lindsay Patton with 5. Leaders in assists were Cochran with 4 and Arencebica and Bleckley with 2 each. Statistics reported in the newspaper usually are focused on offensive excellence but special mention needs to be made for the strong inside play by Blythe and Cowart against physically very strong opponents in both the Gordon Lee and Dawson County games.

Individual bright spots present in three losses for Indians in Battle of the States

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A difficult season continued for the Towns County Indians Varsity Basketball Team last week as they fell to defeat in all three games played in the Battle of the States Tournament in the Towns County Gym. The three losses leave the Indians with an overall 2-12 record, including 1-2 in Region 8A play. The Indians will be in action for just one game this week as they host a region foe, the Commerce Tigers, on Friday night.

INDIANS VERSUS POLK COUNTY

The Indians faced the Polk County (Tennessee) Wildcats on opening night of the tournament on Tuesday and the game proved to be quite a battle for the first half. After Polk opened the game with a 4-0 lead, the Indians rallied on a Stetson Hedden field goal, two free throws by Rylan Albach, and a trey by Ryan Tallent in just forty two seconds for a 7-4 lead with 5:54 left in the first quarter.

That would be their only lead of the game, as it turned out, but the Indians made things uncomfortable for the Wildcats throughout the first half. After Polk County struck for six straight points and a 10-7 lead, the two teams pretty much swapped points the remainder of the first quarter with freshman Dallas Manus scoring seven of ten Indian points as Polk finished the quarter with a 20-17 lead.

Manus sank a trey as the first quarter ended and opened the second with another, tying

the score at 20-20 with 7:07 on the clock. Albach then answered a Wildcat field goal with a pair of free throws at 6:06 for another tie, the third of the game. The scoring pace slowed considerably after that but with Polk connecting for seven well spaced points for a 29-22 lead which was reduced to 29-25 by another Manus trey with fifty four seconds left. A Wildcat free throw set the score at intermission at 30-25.

Four Indian freshmen—Manus, Grant Arencebica, Boone Moss, and Cruz Shook—saw considerable action together in the second quarter and more than held their own against the physically strong and veteran Wildcats. Manus easily led the Indians in scoring the first half with seven points in the first quarter and six in the second while Albach scored five on five for eight free throw shooting.

The second half proved to be difficult for the Indians as the Wildcats embarked on an extended 23-3 run for a 46-28 lead after three quarters and a bulging 53-28 lead by the 6:50 mark of the fourth. The Indians finished on a positive note, using a trey by Shook, deuces by Moss and Tallent, and Manus' fourth trey of the game in matching the Wildcats point for point the final 5:10 of the game for the final Wildcat margin of victory of 63-38.

Manus tied Wildcat senior point guard and all tournament selection Alex Akins for scoring honors for the game with 16 points and was followed by Albach and Tallent with 5 each. Leaders in assists were Albach and Dakota Barrett with 2 each.

The victory sent Polk County into a semi final game against Hayesville where the Wildcats battled the eventual tournament champions to the closing minutes, holding a 46-45 lead past the five minute mark of the fourth quarter before falling by a 55-48 score. The Wildcats also fell in the third place game to Dawson County by a 42-31 score.

INDIANS VERSUS GORDON LEE

The loss to Polk County sent Towns County into a consolation game on Wednesday against Gordon Lee and the last half struggles against Polk County continued for the Indians. The visiting Dragons from Chickamauga spurted out to a 15-2 lead less than two and a half minutes into the game and led 21-5 by the 3:38 mark before a brief Indian rally interrupted an otherwise dominating first half by the Dragons.

A Boone Moss field goal at the three minute mark triggered a 7-4 first quarter finish by the Indians which included a trey by Dallas Manus and a basket by Aaron Dodson for a 25-12 score which became 25-15 when Dodson opened the second quarter with a trey. Dodson then followed a trey and a deuce by the Dragons with a field goal, giving him seven straight Indian points and a 30-17 score but the game quickly went down hill for the Indians after that.

They managed just a trey by Manus with seven seconds on the clock in interrupting a 21-0 Gordon Lee run for a 51-20 deficit at intermission. The Dragons

then continued on for a 68-23 lead before a trey by Grant Arencebica at 1:12 of the third quarter triggered a 19-12 finish for the Indians who closed the gap to 82-40 by game's end. Seven different Indians put points on the board during the closing run with Manus leading the way with eight.

The Indians were led in scoring for the game by Manus with 16 points, Dodson with 8, and Stetson Hedden and Shook with 4 each. Manus also led in assists with 3 and was followed by Brett Barrett, Dodson, and Tallent with 2 each. This game marked a brief return to action for sophomore Garrett Bradshaw who had missed several weeks of action due to a sprained ankle.

Gordon Lee went on to finish fifth in the tournament by taking a 55-41 win over Union County who played in the tournament without the services of point guard Zach Odom who has a fractured patella.

INDIANS VERSUS MURPHY

The Indians faced Murphy on Thursday in the battle for seventh place in the tournament and came up just short of victory as they ran out of time before a late rally could overtake the Bulldogs. The Indians fell to 9-2 and 12-4 deficits by the 2:16 mark of the first quarter before an Aaron Dodson basket and two free throws by Brandon Henderson got them within 13-8 by quarter's end.

After Murphy opened the second quarter with a trey for a 16-8 lead, the two teams played on a virtually equal basis the re-



Coach Ken Hamilton talks to his team during a timeout against Murphy. Photo by James Reese.

mainder of the quarter as Murphy held a 26-19 lead at intermission on the strength of a trey with ten seconds on the clock. Five different Indians put points on the scoreboard in the second quarter with Henderson leading the way with five.

The Bulldogs extended their lead to 40-25 in the third quarter despite five points on a trey and two for two free throw shooting by Dallas Manus. The Bulldogs had their biggest lead of the game at 44-27 by the 7:14 mark of the fourth quarter before freshman Cruz Shook led the Indians on a 9-1 run for a single digits deficit of 45-36 with 5:44 on the clock.

Shook used a trey, a long deuce, and a put back basket for seven points during the run with fellow freshman Manus adding a coast to coast journey and jump shot in just a minute and eighteen seconds of playing time. The

Bulldogs regained two points on their lead for a 50-39 score by the 3:42 mark but the Indians again mounted a rally, going on a 14-6 run between the 3:11 and seven seconds marks for just a 56-53 deficit.

The run was achieved by two free throws by Manus, a trey by Ryan Tallent, a free throw by Manus, a deuce by Aaron Dodson, and another trey by Tallent at that seven seconds mark. A Murphy free throw at 4.4 seconds, however, gave the Bulldogs a two possession lead of 57-53 which held up for the win.

Manus, who was named to the all tournament team, again led the Indians in scoring with 14 points and was followed by Tallent with 9, Henderson with 8, Shook with 7, Albach with 6, and Dodson with 5. Leading in assists were Manus with 3 and Brett Barrett with 2.