

# Towns County Sports

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## Lady Indians repeat as Region Champions

### Last half scoring surge propels them to third title in four years



Coach Jim Melton looks on as his Lady Indians prepare to clinch their second consecutive Region 8-A title. Photo by James Reese



Ali Bleckley looks for Eryn Cochran against George Walton. Photo by James Reese.

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In an absolutely marvelous performance by all participating players, the Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Basketball Team captured their second straight Region 8A Tournament Championship and third in three years with a resounding last half rally over George Walton Academy of Monroe. They used a 28-8 scoring run between the 6:54 mark of the third quarter and the 3:51 mark of the third in charging from a 41-36 deficit to a 64-49 lead and protected it in taking the 2012 Region 8A Tournament Championship in the Lakeview Academy Gym in Gainesville by a 66-54 score last Saturday night.

The Lady Indians completed a clean sweep of the region tournament as they bested Prince Avenue Christian School by a 57-42 score in first round play on Tuesday at George Walton Academy and Athens Academy by a 60-35 margin at Lakeview Academy in Gainesville in the semi finals on Friday. The win over Prince Avenue gave the Lady Indians' their sixth straight twenty win season and eighth overall under head coach Jim Melton. They further won twenty or more games six times under head coach Dion Eller and two under Robbie Stencil for a total of sixteen seasons with twenty or more wins in the modern era under rover and full court rules back through the 1971 season.

The region championship run improved the Lady Indians' overall record for this season to 22-6, including 15-0 against Region 8A opponents in regular and post season play as they prepare to enter the first round of the Class A State Tournament. It's a near certainty at press time that the Lady Indians will host the Georgia Military Lady Bulldogs of Milledgeville on Friday with the time to be determined after press time. Readers wishing to attend the game should check with the school, coaches, players, or other fans to confirm the opponent and date and learn of the time.

If victorious in this game, the Lady Indians will then host a second round game, most likely next Tuesday, February 28 at a time to be determined. The winner of that game will then move on to the Elite Eight round at Marietta High School on Saturday, March 3, with the starting time of that game also as yet to be determined.

**PRINCE AVENUE CHRISTIAN** - The Lady Indians came face to face with Prince Avenue in the opening round on Tuesday at George Walton Academy with the Lady Wolverines having pulled off a come from behind win in the region championship game two years ago in the Towns County Gym. They then gave the Lady Indians a real battle before falling in the region championship game last year at Athens Christian School.

The Lady Indians showed total domination over Prince Avenue, however, on this occasion for just over two and a half quarters in leading by such scores as 11-0, 24-5, and 31-9 during the first half and 49-15 in the third quarter before the Lady Wolverines reduced the final margin to 57-42. Lady Indians seniors Gabby Arencibia, Ali Bleckley, and Lindsay Patton got their team off and running with outstanding first quarters. Arencibia included a pair of treys in an eight point quarter,

Bleckley a trey and a traditional three point play in scoring six points, and Patton three deuces in providing six.

Four different Lady Indians entered the scoring column in an overall low scoring second quarter as the Lady Indians led 31-13 at intermission before striking for three points at a time at the start of the third. Two treys each by Stephanie Patton and Bleckley and a three point play by Lindsay Patton highlighted an 18-2 third quarter run for the Lady Indians as they accumulated that 49-15 lead. The Lady Wolverines included four treys in a 27-8 run the final eleven and a half minutes with Dadrian Blythe providing six of the Lady Indians' points.

Leading the scoring parade for the Lady Indians were Arencibia with 13, Bleckley with 12, Lindsay Patton with 10, Blythe with 8, Stephanie Patton with 6, and Cochran with 5 while Cochran and Bleckley led in assists with 6 and 3 respectively according to your reporter's unofficial tally.

**ATHENS ACADEMY** - The Lady Indians had seized complete control of their only confrontation of the regular season with Athens Academy when they bolted out to a 22-2 lead barely four minutes into the first quarter and coasted to a 59-27 home court victory. In the region semi final match up with the Lady Spartans at Lakeview Academy on Friday, however, a totally opposite scenario was present as the Lady Spartans played extremely well and took advantage of ice cold shooting by the Lady Indians in remaining in striking distance for most of the first half.

Kellsie Cowart got the Lady Indians leads of 2-0 on a put back basket and then 4-2 on two free throws with the second lead never being overcome although challenged by the persistent Lady Spartans. A deuce and trey by Stephanie Patton were largely responsible for the Lady Indians taking a 12-3 lead by the two and a half minute mark of the first quarter but the Lady Spartans reduced the lead to 12-6 by quarter's end and then to 12-11 just forty six seconds into the second.

Two field goals by Ali Bleckley led the Lady Indians out to a 20-13 lead with 2:40 left in the second quarter but an Athens trey had them again knocking on the door at 20-16 just fifteen seconds later. But two field goals by Gabby Arencibia beginning at the 1:47 mark triggered a 10-0 Lady Indian run for a 30-16 advantage at intermission. Bleckley with six points and Arencibia and Stephanie Patton with five each were the top point producers during second quarter action. Six points by Eryn Cochran and five by Arencibia were highlights of third quarter action as the Lady Indians extended their lead to 49-22 before coasting to a 60-35 victory in spite of ice cold shooting for much of the game.

Scoring leaders for the game for the Lady Indians were Bleckley with 14 points, Arencibia and Stephanie Patton with 12 each, Cochran with 11, and Cowart with 6. leading in assists were Arencibia and Cochran with 5 each and Bleckley with 3.

**GEORGE WALTON ACADEMY** - It seemed that both teams rose to the occasion of a region championship game with both bringing their "A" game when the Lady Indians faced off against George Wal-



Gabby Arencibia launches a trey against George Walton. Photo by James Reese.



Eryn Cochran runs the fastbreak against George Walton. Photo by James Reese.

ton Academy on Saturday at Lakeview Academy. Fans were treated to a classic battle for the entire first half and into the early portions of the third quarter with an especially competitive first quarter included. There were ten first quarter ties with actually just two lead changes with the Lady Indians holding small leads of no more than 8-4 for most of the quarter.

Sisters Lindsay and Stephanie Patton provided much of the first quarter offensive fire power for the Lady Indians as Lindsay provided two early baskets for four points and Stephanie a trey and two deuces near the end for seven while Eryn Cochran scored a pair of well spaced baskets as the Lady Indians led 20-17 by quarter's end. The Lady Indians took three separate leads in the quarter of 2-0 on an Ali Bleckley basket, 13-11 on a Stephanie Patton trey, and 18-15 on a three point play by Gabby Arencibia.

It appeared the Lady Indians might be gaining the upper hand when treys by Stephanie Patton and Arencibia in just twenty four seconds had them leading 26-19 by the 5:58 mark of the second quarter but the Lady Bulldogs responded with an 8-1 run for a 27-27 standoff at 4:27. Treys by Arencibia gave the Lady Indians leads of 30-27 at 4:15 and 36-33 at 1:24 but a field goal and two late free throws had the Lady Bulldogs ahead 37-36 at intermission.

George Walton opened the third quarter with a pair of field goals for their biggest lead of 41-36 at 7:08 but it turned out to be the calm before the storm for the Lady Bulldogs. Treys by Arencibia and Stephanie Patton at 6:54 and 6:19 had the Lady Indians back in front 42-41 but George Walton responded to a coast to coast run by Eryn Cochran for two points with a trey for a 44-44 standoff at 5:28 and they matched a Patton runner for their last tie of 46-46 at 4:49.

It required more than a minute for Ali Bleckley to claim an offensive rebound and make a nifty move for a field goal and a Lady Indian lead of 48-46 and the race was on for the Lady Indians for awhile but pretty much without the Lady Bulldogs participating. An inside out pass from Kellsie Cowart to Cochran for a trey and a great pass from Cowart to Dadrian Blythe for a deuce at the 2:46 and twenty four seconds marks led the Lady Indians out to a 54-47 lead entering the fourth quarter.

The Lady Indians were far from through, however, as they opened the fourth quarter with a 10-2 run by the 3:51 mark on a pair of deuces by Arencibia sandwiched around a Lady Dogs two pointer and a matching field goal by Blythe with Bleckley finishing the run with two free throws and a left handed layup on a great pass from Blythe at 3:51.

Indians completed an 18-3 run in barely more than seven and a half minutes of playing time and an overall 28-8 run in barely eleven minutes back to the 6:54 mark of the third quarter for a 64-49 lead. The Lady Indians successfully slowed the game down after that with the Lady Bulldogs wrapping a put back basket and a very late trey around two free throws by Arencibia for a 66-54 Lady Indians win and the Region 8A Championship.

The Lady Bulldogs had just a couple of team fouls for the half at the beginning of the Lady Indians' slowdown and by the time they committed enough fouls to send the Lady Indians to the line for Arencibia's free throws at the 38.3 mark, they appeared to realize it was too late to get back in the game and refrained from excessive foul-



Lindsay Patton takes it to the net against George Walton. Photo by James Reese.



Stephanie Patton goes for two against George Walton. Photo by James Reese.

ing. The Lady Indians got clutch performances from each of the players mentioned in the above description of the game from dynamite scoring to pinpoint passing, strong rebounding, and especially effective defensive play the last half against the sometimes overpowering height and put back capabilities of the Lady Bulldogs. Bleckley deserves special mention for coming up with loose balls and very special effectiveness defensively and on the boards the last half in largely containing the powerfully built 6'11"

Ivy Atkism who, along with her 6' cousin Bre Atkism and two 5'10" players, give the Lady Bulldogs a powerful inside presence.

The Lady Indians were led in scoring by Arencibia with 22 points, Stephanie Patton with 15, Cochran with 11, Bleckley with 8, and Lindsay Patton with 6. The Lady Indians collected seventeen assists in the game according to your reporter's tally with leaders being Bleckley with 5, Cochran with 4 and the trio of Arencibia, Cowart, and Stephanie Patton with 2 each.

## Indians finish state tournament in style; Stroud takes a bronze at 152



Coach Jeff Stowers celebrates with Zack Stroud, Tyler Hoffman and Tim Collier. Photo by James Reese

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Duluth - The 2011-2012 Towns County Indians Wrestling team will go down in the books as one of the best ever in the eight years of the program. The Indians placed sixth in Class A as a team. They finished with three wrestlers in the Top Five of their weight classes. Zack Stroud, Tim Collier and Tyler Hoffman go into the Indians record books as the only three wrestlers to qualify and place highly in the State Traditionals Tournament. "All three placed, they placed sixth in the state tournament. Zack Stroud finished third. Tyler and Tim finished fifth. All of them placed in the state," Indians Head Coach Jeff Stowers said. "Zack had the highest finish ever for a Towns County wrestler. We finished twelfth as a team with just the three kids we took. So, I felt we accomplished a lot."

Stroud, 58-8 this season, finished as Class A's No. 3 wrestler at the 152-pound weight class. Collier, 49-11 this season, finished fifth as the fifth best wrestler at Class A's 138-pound weight class. Hoffman, 49-15 this season,

finished as the fifth best wrestler at Class A's 160-pound weight class. "I was really pleased with our results," Indians' Head Coach Jeff Stowers said. "Tim has battled injuries all year long. He didn't even get to qualify at area last year. Even though he was probably was the best wrestler in his weight class. He hurt his shoulder before the areas and he didn't get to compete."

"It was really good to see our two seniors along with Tyler as the leaders of our team to go out and work as hard as they did all year and battle back through all of the stuff that they've had to be-

able to place," Coach Stowers said.

"The state tournament gets harder every year," Coach Stowers said. "It's crazy to see how much stronger the competition is now even from four or five years ago. It's come so far it's amazing. To have those three guys come out and really compete is a great thing. I felt like Tim was as good as anybody in his weight class."

"He lost in overtime his first match. He was beaten by a two-time state champion in the console semis. He was as good as anyone," Coach Stowers said. "I was really impressed that they battled back with all the adversity they had over the past year or so and still able to compete."

"They went out on top considering they all won their last match," he said. "There're very few kids that leave the gym happy unless they win the state title; they're really not happy, but they went out like champs even after losing tough matches and did really good things all weekend. They showed a lot of class in the way they carry and behave themselves. They held their heads up and worked. We got a lot of compliments on the effort they put forth. It was just a good way to go out."

## Recreation Department offers belly dancing classes

The Towns County Recreation Department in association with instructor Tasa Johnson will be offering Middle Eastern Dance (belly dancing) beginning Thursday, March 1. Classes will be held each Thursday in the Recreation Center from 6 to 7:30 PM for 6 weeks. Class is for females ages 18 and up. Cost for the 6-week class will be \$60.

Tasa has been teaching

the art of belly dancing since 1990. In 2005 she moved to Murphy, NC, and began teaching classes. Class size is limited so if you would like to sign up or for more information you can come by the Recreation Department or call us at 706-896-2600. If you wish to speak to our instructor you may call Tasa Johnson at 828-835-9789.

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