



Towns County Herald's Sporting News



Indians ...from page 1A

awaited second region championship but also served as a tie breaker of sorts in the two year competition with Social Circle, the only team in Region 8A to get a win against the Lady Indians during the two years.

The Lady Redskins avenged a 71-68 home loss to the Lady Indians in the only regular season meeting of the two teams last year by winning the region tournament championship by a 67-57 score in the Towns County gym. In a similar manner, they avenged a 57-55 home loss last month with the aforementioned win on TCHS senior night with the region championship game turning out to be the tie breaker for the two years. The Lady Redskins won both games played at TCHS during the two years but the Lady Indians more than offset that accomplishment with the three victories at Social Circle.

Winning the Region 8A Tournament Championship required victories over Hebron Christian in first round play at Lakeview Academy on Tuesday and over Athens Christian in the semi-final round at Social Circle on Friday for the Lady Indians to reach the championship game. The win over Hebron not only assured the Lady Indians of their ninth trip to the state tournament in eleven years under Head Coach Jim Melton but was the 200th varsity win for Melton. Among Lady Indian coaches, Melton trails only Dion Eller's 272 victories accomplished in nineteen years through the 1987 season plus two games as interim coach at the start of the 1993 season.

The semi-final win over Athens Christian then clinched home court advantage for the Lady Indians for the first round of the state tournament and the victory over Social Circle clinched a second state tournament home court advantage if victorious in the first round game. The three victories not only give the Lady Indians a 23-5 record for this season but extend their two year record to 51-9. Incredibly, they have lost to just one team on the opponent's home court in the two years, a 51-48 early season loss at Class AA Rabun County this year.

The Lady Indians host Eagle's Landing Christian Academy of McDonough, the fourth place team from Region 7A, in the Class A State Tournament opening round this Friday with the game time not decided as of press time. If victorious, they will then host the winner of a Friday game between third place Bremen of Region 6A and third place Pace Academy of Region 5A next Tuesday, according to the <ga.prepcountry.com> website. The winner of that game will qualify for third

round state tournament play on Friday, March 6, with the site for that round said on the website to be assigned after the conclusion of the second round.

FINDING A WAY TO WIN, PART ONE – It is often stated that outstanding teams will find a way to win with players rising to the occasion in response to dire challenges. This turned out to be the case for the Lady Indians last week when they seemed to be in control of their first and second round Region 8A Tournament games against Hebron Christian and Athens Christian, only to have the Lady Lions and Lady Eagles rally for near victories.

On Tuesday against Hebron Christian, it was Region 8A Player of the Year Nikki Winn and first team all region player Melissa Conrad taking charge at the end of the game to regain control after Hebron rallied for a late tie. On Friday, then, it was Conrad who made one of the Lady Indians' most crucial defensive stops of this or any season in preserving a close victory over Athens Christian and getting her team in the championship game.

With the exception of a brief 7-7 tie, the Lady Indians led Hebron for all of the first half, including by their biggest margin of the half of 30-13 at intermission. They had their biggest lead of the game barely half a minute into the third quarter by a 33-13 score. Perhaps the big lead caused the Lady Indians to relax a bit too much or maybe the Lady Lions were due to make an offensive move.

At any rate, the Lady Lions embarked on a 12-0 run to twice close to within eight points prior to the mid point of the third quarter. The Lady Indians responded with an 11-5 run of their own for a 46-32 at quarter's end and seemed to have regained control of the game. The Lady Lions weren't through, however, as they finished a 17-2 run with a pair of treys for a 48-48 standoff with 3:10 remaining in the game.

The sudden turn of events seemed to arouse the Lady Indians who finished the game on a ten point run for a 58-48 victory and assurance of a return to the state tournament. Winn had a hand in nine of the ten points, beginning with a pass to Conrad who was fouled at 2:41 and sank the first of two free throws for a 49-48 TCHS lead. Winn followed with two free throws and then a long deuce from the top of the circle at 1:47 for a 53-48 Lady Indian advantage.

Conrad sank the first of two free throws when fouled on a putback attempt at 1:10 and Winn sank two more free throws and assisted Conrad on a layup by game's end to set the final score at 58-48.

Scoring leaders were Winn with 21 points, Conrad with 13, Ali Bleckley and Jordan Moss with 8 each, and Ellie Parton with 6. Winn led in

assists with 6 while Gabby Arencibia followed with 2. The Lady Indians welcomed back sharpshooter Kerri Abernathy after a lengthy bout with illness and she got in the game briefly at the end of the third quarter. By Saturday, it was determined that a second long bus ride and extended day might be too much for her so she rode to the game with her parents and provided support to her team by her presence on the bench.

FINDING A WAY TO WIN, PART TWO – The Lady Indians dominated the opening minutes of the game against Athens Christian in every manner except on the scoreboard. They forced numerous turnovers but put only a Jordan Moss field goal on the scoreboard near the five and a half minute mark of the first quarter for a 2-0 lead.

Athens Christian followed with eight straight points before a late trey by Nikki Winn got the Lady Indians to within 8-5 after one quarter. Winn's basket triggered a lengthy 29-7 run for a 31-15 Towns lead with 2:55 left in the third quarter.

The Lady Eagles closed to within 33-20 after three, however, and rallied following a Lindsy Patton basket and a 41-31 Lady Indian lead at 2:37 to within 42-39 at the 1:07 mark.

Jordan Moss sank two clutch free throws at 57.3 seconds for a 44-39 score but Winn was lost on

fouls for the first time this season at 50.1, setting the stage for a frantic finish for the Lady Indians without their floor leader.

The Lady Eagles converted one free throw at 50.1 mark and pretty much threw the ball at and in the goal from just inside the three point line at twenty seven seconds following a Lady Indian inbounds turnover for just a 44-42 Towns lead.

With the Lady Indians still clinging to that lead, Conrad blocked a potential game tying shot near the five second mark, retrieved the ball, and sank two ensuing free throws at 3.1 seconds, clinching a 46-42 Lady Indian victory.

For the game, the Lady Indians were led in scoring by Winn with 14 points, Conrad with 12 with all coming in the last half, and Moss and Patton with 6 each. Winn also led in assists with 3 with Gabby Arencibia and Ali Bleckley right behind with 2 each.

A RETURN TO EARLY SEASON FORM BRINGS HOME THE CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY – Perhaps some of the Lady Indians' competitive edge attained through a challenging early season schedule was lost as a result of a number of decisive victories in January and early February. Whether that were the case or not, the Lady Indians had faced a bit of adversity in recent games. This was evident not only during their only loss to date following the Battle of the States to Social

Circle but in regular season close calls against Athens Christian and Lakeview Academy following earlier dominating wins over the Lady Eagles and Lady Lions.

And this was perhaps a contributing factor when losing big leads to Hebron Christian and Athens Christian in the opening tournament games, although these teams must certainly be commended for their strong closing runs. Whether that were the case or not, the Lady Indians accepted the challenge of a tough opponent and were truly outstanding from beginning to end in the championship game against Social Circle.

Great defensive intensity as a unit combined with timely scoring allowed the Lady Indians to overcome 2-0, 5-3, and 7-5 Social Circle leads for advantages of as much as 13-7 in the first quarter and as many as eight points on two occasions in the second, including by 29-21 at intermission. Long deuces by Gabby Arencibia and Winn and a free throw by Winn had extended just a 24-21 Lady Indian advantage the final 1:40 of the first half.

The Lady Indians had answers for every Social Circle challenge of the last half, maintaining for the most part double digit leads. An early third quarter drive for two had the Lady Redskins within 29-23 but a deuce and a trey by Winn and a free throw by Amber Allen doubled that lead for a 35-23 advantage. A Jordan Moss steal near mid court and drive for two then gave

them a 39-28 lead near the end of the third quarter.

After Social Circle closed the third quarter with a field goal and opened the fourth with another for just a 39-32 deficit, a Moss field goal and an Ellie Parton trey gave the Lady Indians a 47-35 lead. The Lady Redskins then pulled to within nine points on two occasions by mid quarter but Winn answered with a trey each time and the Lady Indians had a 50-38 lead with 2:40 left in the game. That would be the Lady Indians' final field goals but they protected the lead with six for nine free throw shooting the rest of the way in closing out the 56-46 victory.

Winn led the Lady Indians with 24 points but with lots of scoring help from Moss with 10 points, Conrad with 7, Arencibia with 6, Parton with 5, and Allen and Heather Hamilton with 2 each. Contributing assists according to your reporter's unofficial tally were Winn with 2 along with Allen, Arencibia, Moss, and Parton with 1 each. As always however, this game was about more than offense with team and individual defense and outstanding rebounding contributing equally to the victory.

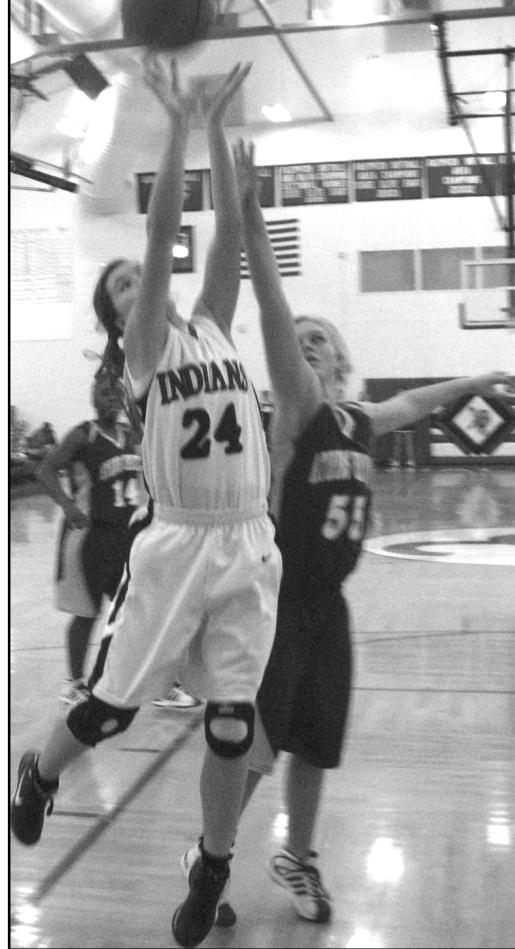
This report would be incomplete without extending individual kudos to Conrad who, as a junior, held fellow all region selection Maritza Heard, a senior, to just two points in the game. Also seeing action and contributing to the victory were freshmen Ali

Bleckley and Lindsay Patton. And Lady Indian Head Coach Jim Melton received compliments for astute substitutions keeping the players rested and at full speed.

Make no mistake, the Lady Indians and Indians have enjoyed numerous team and individual successes for many years but region championships have been hard to come by and for those of us who have followed the teams for decades, this is a very special win. Thanks, ladies for the special memories you have created for us old timers and the younger folks as well. Keep up the good work a game at a time as you enter state tournament play.

ELSEWHERE – Some readers may not be aware of the success of our neighboring schools who dominated the south sub-region in the Region 8AA Tournament. The Union County Lady Panthers took that championship by taking the measure of former Lady Indians Region 8A rival Jefferson at North Oconee by a 46-38 score and then Rabun County and Fannin County in the Rabun County gym by scores of 57-51 and 57-45 respectively.

The Rabun County Girls, who finished undefeated in Region 8AA in regular season, took third place with a 62-52 win over North Oconee. Of course, the Lady Indians split two and three point decisions with Union County during the season, used a 51-19 run in a come from behind win over Fannin, and fell by just a three point margin at Rabun County.



Jordan Moss goes up for the rebound
Photos by Lowell Nicholson



Mellisa Conrad tries to score.



Jordan Moss drives to the net.

Indians win Wildcat scrimmage

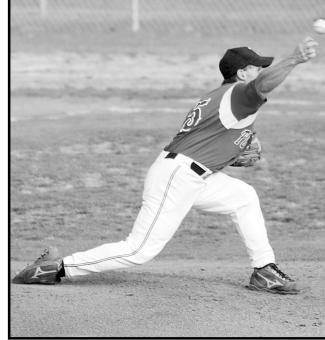
JIM BRYANT

Sports Writer

The TCHS Indians geared up for the upcoming baseball season with a successful outing against the Rabun County Wildcats. The Tribe was obviously anxious to get the season started as they took a 6-3 win, all six runs coming in the first inning. Trystan Drummond started on the hill for the Indians and was later followed by reliever, Taylor Denton. YHC signee, Ezekiel Gribble pitched for three and got credit for the save.

In the bottom of the first inning, Charles Corn got the scoreboard going in favor of the home team when he smashed a 2-run homerun. That ignited the Tribe and they punched across four additional runs before the Wildcats could gain

their composure. The W'Cats came back to plate three runs but Gribble took the save and the Indians posted the 6-3 victory. On the day, Charles Corn and Randy Smith each had two hits for the Indians. With the baseball win and the Lady Indians taking the 8A Region Basketball Championship, it was a great week for Tribal sports.



Ezekiel Gribble became the third pitcher of the day and took the save in the 6-3 win.



Charles Corn bashed a 2-run homerun to start the six run first inning against the W'Cats.
Photos by Jim and Lisa Bryant

Herald's sports quote of the week

"One thing I believe to the fullest is that if you think and achieve as a team, the individual accolades will take care of themselves. Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships."

- Michael Jordan, basketball player

WILD FACTS: young artist contest

Hey, kids! In anticipation of spring, cure your winter blues by drawing or painting a picture for one of the Georgia DNR's art contests! The Give Wildlife A Chance poster contest is open to K-5th grade and this year's theme is "Nature's gifts: the plants and animals of Georgia." The deadline to submit artwork is March 9.

Also, the Youth Birding T-shirt Art Contest is open to all grade levels, and the deadline to turn in native bird pictures is March 16. (The deadline has been extended from March 2!) For more info, visit www.georgiawildlife.com and click "Get Involved" for details. Or you can e-mail



linda.may@gadnr.org for more on the T-shirt Art Contest, and GiveWildlifeAChance@gmail.com for details concerning the poster contest.

WILD Facts is a regular feature written by Linda May, a wildlife interpretive specialist with the Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division.

SPORTSWATCH

by Jim Bryant

Region AAA Girls Basketball Tournament

White County 30 East Hall 82

Gilmer County 51 West Forsyth 48

Gilmer County 67 Chestattee 48

Pickens County 52 Johnson 33

Pickens County 45 East Hall 48

Lumpkin County 62 Flowery Branch 67 (2OT)

Chestattee 51 Flowery Branch 24

Gainesville 46 East Hall 39

West Hall 24 Gainesville 50

West Hall 47 North Hall 37

Gainesville 47 Chestattee 27

Prep Baseball

Towns County 6 Rabun County 3

(Scrimmage)

Boys Prep Soccer

West Hall 7

White County 0

Fannin County 2

Girls Prep Soccer

White County 3

White County 0

West Hall 4

Fannin County 0

Boys Prep Golf

Lumpkin County 157 Dawson County 171

Boys Prep Tennis

Gilmer County 1

Chestattee 4