



Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Panthers spoil Indians season opener

By James Reese
Towns County Herald
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Class AA's Union County Panthers spoiled the season opener for the Towns County Indians last week.

The Panthers claimed a 9-5 victory over the Indians in the season openers for both teams.

The Indians bats came out cold as ice, struggling to mount a rally against the Panthers.

Indians' starting pitcher Taylor Denton broke the hitless drought with the Indians' first hit of the young season.

The Panthers jumped out to a 9-0 lead going into the top of the fifth inning. On the verge of having the game by mercy rule, the Indians defense managed to fend off a Panther charge as Union loaded the bases.

Between innings, Indians Head Baseball Coach Chris Vardo gave an inspirational plea to his players to hang in and try to create a spark.

That spark arrived in the bottom half of the fifth in the form of a Dylan Diehl single to right. Designated Hitter Wesley Bloodworth would follow with another shot toward first to put two on and nobody out. Following a walk and the bases loaded, senior Billy Meier drove in the first Indian run of the year with a solid line drive shot back up the middle. The Indians added four more runs before the Panthers' relief corps extinguished the Indians late rally.

The Panthers returned to Blairsville with a 9-5 season-opening win over the Indians.

The two teams were scheduled to play seven innings on Tuesday in Blairsville weather permitting. News results of the matchup were not available at press time.



The Indians are anxious to mount a rally against Union County Photo by Lowell Nicholson.



Billy Meier drives home two against the Panthers Photo by James Reese.



Freshman Catcher Vonya Baldwin waits for the season's first pitch to cross home plate Photo by James Reese.



Opening Day starter Taylor Denton fires the first pitch of 2011 Photo by Lowell Nicholson.

21st Century hosts family game night

The 21st Century After-school Program will be hosting a Family Game Night on Tuesday, March 15, at 5 p.m. in the Towns County Middle School Lunchroom. This is a free event for all 21st Century Afterschool students and their families. Pizza will be served

as well as a special dessert prepared by the students. Please make plans to attend our family event for some quality time with your family. For more information, please call Gina Chambers, 21st Century Site Coordinator, at 706-896-4131, ext. 1155. TMar2,FJ/SH

Near darkness costs Indians first diamond win

By James Reese
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Tallulah Falls - The Towns County Indians Diamond heroes tried to put one in the win column on Thursday against Region 8-A rivals Tallulah Falls.

From all indications, it was going to happen. That is until the umpire went to the Tallulah Falls bench around 6:15 p.m. with the Indians winning 6-1 in the bottom of the fourth.

As the umpire walked away from the Tallulah Falls bench, players exited the dugout and prepared for the traditional shaking of hands following a completed game.

The game was scratched due to approaching darkness. The Tallulah Falls Indians' baseball field has no lights and the umpire felt there wasn't enough time to get out of the inning for a complete game.

The two teams will start from scratch at a later date in the season, a disappointed Towns County Indians Head Coach Chris Vardo said.

Despite the scratched game, the Indians looked sharp when the ball was in play.

In the top of the first inning starting pitcher Alan Turpin got on base. Unfortunately, he was left stranded at third base by the time the third out of the inning was recorded.

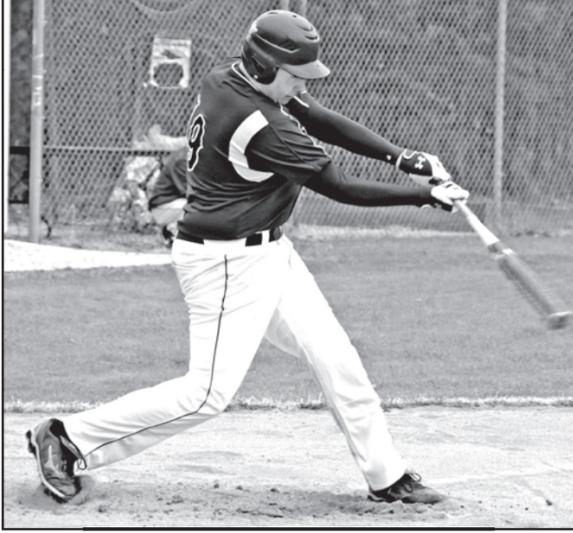
Towns fell behind 1-0 in the bottom of the first inning as Tallulah Falls played small ball to push a run across the plate.

In the top of the second inning, Towns senior Brett Bradshaw doubled on a long fly to left to give the Indians yet another runner in scoring position. Designated Hitter Paydon Shook reached base and drove in Bradshaw.

Jimmy Pearce singled to put both he and Shook in scoring position. Senior third baseman Billy Meier proceeded to drive in both Pearce and Shook to give Towns a 3-1 lead.

Meier eventually came around to score to make it 4-1 Towns.

In the third inning Shook



First baseman Kyle McConnell lines a double to right against Tallulah Falls Photo by James Reese.



Senior Alan Turpin gets a lead from third against Tallulah Falls Photo by James Reese.

again reached followed by another single by Pearce. Dylan Diehl reached on a fielding error and Shook came into score and make it 5-1 Towns.

In the top of the fourth, Meier reached with a lead-off single followed by a run-scoring double by first baseman Kyle

McConnell. Meier accounted for the Indians sixth and final run of the day.

The fateful bottom of the fourth arrived and at 6:15 p.m. the umpire called game unceremoniously due to impending darkness. The decision left the Indians searching for their first victory on the young season.

The Indians headed to Blairsville on Tuesday looking to avenge an opening season loss at the hands of their arch rival Union County Panthers. News accounts of the game were not available at press time.

The Indians face Prince Avenue Christian at Indians Field at 5 p.m. on Friday in what is now their Region 8-A opener.

NASCAR 2010

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

JEFF GORDON PULLS AWAY FOR PHOENIX WIN

Jeff Gordon is back. Gordon, who led 168 of the 312 lap Subway Fresh 500 at Phoenix on Sunday, caught and passed Kyle Busch on lap 308, then pulled away for his first win in 66 races.

"Are you kidding me, it's been way too long," said Gordon, who started the race 20th. "Ooh, this feels good. I didn't care how we did it, I just wanted to get to victory lane."

Gordon had lost the lead during a round of pit stops, but on lap 308, he was able to squeeze under Kyle Busch's No. 18 as the two cars went into turn-1. That was enough to loosen Busch's car up, and Gordon sailed by.

Busch was not able to regain his momentum and had to settle for second.

"We came through a lot of adversity during the race," said Busch. "We had good pit stops, but Jeff ran me down and passed. He had the fastest car."

Busch got into the pole-sitter, Carl Edwards, forcing Edwards to pit for extensive repairs to his No. 99.

"I really hate what happened between me and the 99-car," continued Busch. "I really hate that I got into him after he raced me so clean in the Nationwide race."

On lap 59, Edwards saw his day go sour after Kyle Busch veered hard left into his No. 99 Ford along the backstretch. Edwards ran through the dogleg grass and into the wall.

"Hopefully that was an inadvertent move on Kyle's part. I'll talk to him and we'll deal with it accordingly," Edwards said.

After watching a replay of the incident, Edwards added, "I thought at first he was just frustrated and he turned left to get back in line and he didn't know I was there, but I watched the tape and I think he really did get loose."

Brian Vickers triggered a 13-car pileup on the backstretch after his left rear tire went down.

Vickers blamed it on Matt Kenseth.

"Matt wrecked us," Vickers said. "He just door-slammed us in the corner. It's gonna come back to him."

A red flag lasting 14 minutes was required to clean up the resulting mess. Several big-name drivers were involved: Vickers, Jamie McMurray, Clint Bowyer, Jeff Burton and Dale Earnhardt Jr. among them.

Jimmie Johnson, Kevin Harvick, Ryan Newman, Casey Kahne, Tony Stewart, Kurt Busch, A. J. Allmendinger, and Dale Earnhardt Jr. were the remaining top-10 finishers.

Top-12 points leaders after 2 of 34: 1. Kyle Busch-80, 2. Kurt Busch-77, 3. Stewart-69, 4. Allmendinger-69, 5. J. Gordon-65, 6. Martin-65, 7. B. Labonte-64, 8. Newman-64, 9. Montoya-64, 10. Gilliland-63, 11. Menard-63,

12. Edwards-59 BUSCH LEADS EVERY NATIONWIDE LAP

Kyle Busch held off a challenge from Carl Edwards in the closing laps of Saturday's Bashas' Supermarkets 200 at Phoenix International Raceway to win his 44th Nationwide series race.

"First person I have to thank is Carl Edwards for racing me clean. He raced me hard, but raced me clean," Busch said. "After that second long run, I was like, 'Man, so far I've led every lap of this thing,' and it came down toward the end of the race and Carl was alongside me and he was trying to pass me and I was like, 'Man, just beat him back to the start-finish line, just beat him back to the start-finish line.'"

"I was just trying to hold on for as long as I could. Finally, it seemed like it was about 15 laps or so that his stuff would just start falling off enough where we could start clicking back away and get away from him a little bit. I knew if I could just make it to that threshold, that I thought we'd be okay. Fortunately we got there. It was pretty cool. I love doing that stuff and being in the position where you're the guy to beat."

Busch became the first driver to lead every lap of an event in one of NASCAR's top three series since Dale Earnhardt Jr. did it on July 4, 2003, in a Nationwide race at Daytona.

Edwards, who finished .514 seconds behind Busch, made a contest of the race over the final 20 laps, running side by side with Busch for extended stretches as the race neared its end.

The remaining top-10 finishers were: Kevin Harvick, Ryan Newman, Reed Sorenson, Joey Logano, Ricky Stenhouse, Justin Allgaier, Brian Scott and Kenny Wallace.

Danica Patrick finished 17th, three laps down, and posted her third straight top-20 result in the series.

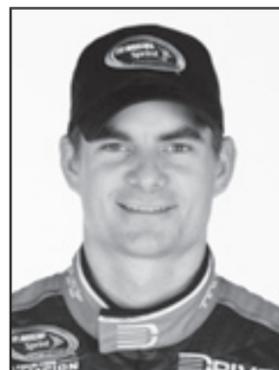
Top-10 points leaders after 2 of 34: 1. Reed Sorenson-78, 2. Ricky Stenhouse-73, 3. Jason Leffler-71, 4. Danica Patrick-58, 5. Joe Nemecek-58, 6. Aric Almirola-56, 7. Mike Bliss-55, 8. Justin Allgaier-53, 9. Kenny Wallace-50, 10. Jeremy Clements-50

KYLE BUSCH DOMINATES TRUCK RACE

Busch beat pole-sitter Clint Bowyer to the checkered flag by .291 seconds, as Bowyer tightened the margin on the final lap of Friday night's Camping World truck race at Phoenix.

Ron Hornaday Jr. was third, followed by Johnny Sauter and Austin Dillon.

As full-time Sprint Cup drivers, Busch and Bowyer aren't collecting points in the truck series. Consequently, seventh-place finisher Matt Crafton left Phoenix with a one-point lead over Clay Rogers in the



Jeff Gordon, winner of Sunday's Phoenix Cup race series standings.

Top-10 points leaders after 2 of 25: 1. Matt Crafton-71, 2. Clay Rogers-70, 3. Cole Whitt-68, 4. Johnny Sauter-67, 5. Timothy Peters-66, 6. Austin Dillon-63, 7. Jeffrey Earnhardt-62, 8. Max Papis-61, 9. Miguel Paludo-59, 10. Ron Hornaday-57.

Commentary: This year's Daytona 500 seemed to get NASCAR off to a good start. There was great fan enthusiasm, and with a 17 per cent increase in television viewers, the season is looking good.

While the fan news appears to be positive, there was no optimism this past week for the Nationwide Series race at Phoenix.

Only 40 cars started the race, which was dominated by Kyle Busch. It was the first time Nationwide didn't have a full 43-car field since February 2008 at California.

NASCAR officials believe the full-time move to the new Nationwide Series car and long travel distance to Phoenix contributed to the shortage of cars. In addition to having only 40 cars, there were five that parked within the first 20 laps.

"Long term, with the new car coming on board, we expected there will be some challenges for some of the smaller-budget teams to get up to speed, which you're seeing," NASCAR VP of Racing Operations Steve O'Donnell said.

I guess we'll have to wait and see how the Nationwide Series shakes out, but most fans I talked with are more optimistic than in the past.

Weekend Racing: It's off to Las Vegas for the Cup and Nationwide teams. The truck teams have their first off-weekend.

Sat., Mar. 5, Nationwide Series, race 3 of 34; Starting time: 3 p.m.; TV: ABC.

Sun., Mar. 6, Sprint Cup race 3 of 36; Starting time: 2 p.m.; TV: Fox.

All times are Eastern.

Racing Trivia Question: Which Cup team does Regan Smith drive for?

Last Week's Question: Who is Kurt Busch's teammate in the Cup series? Answer: It is Brad Keselowski.

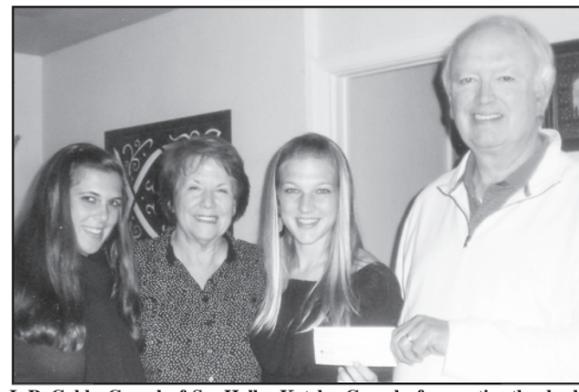
You may contact the Racing Reporter at: hodges@race500.com

Mountain Area Christian Academy receives check from Blue Ridge Turkey Trot 5K Run

On Saturday, February 19th, Mountain Area Christian Academy received the proceeds from the first annual Blue Ridge Turkey Trot. Katelyn Greenleaf, the catalyst behind the run, presented the check to Howell Teasley, MACA's first administrator and present board member. In presenting the check, Katelyn said, "I am presenting this check to Mountain Area Christian Academy for the amount of \$1,700. I want to give all the glory to God for the great success of this first Blue Ridge Turkey Trot."

The Turkey Trot is the result of Miss Greenleaf's idea for her high school junior year's community project. Her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Hal Haller, live in Blue Ridge. Katelyn, along with her parents and sister, come to visit during the Thanksgiving holidays each year. Because she is an accomplished cross country runner, and has participated in many turkey trots, Katelyn wanted to begin one in Blue Ridge.

The 5K run became a



L-R: Gabby Greenleaf, Sue Haller, Katelyn Greenleaf presenting the check to Howell Teasley, board member of Mountain Area Christian Academy

family affair, with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Barry Greenleaf, her grandparents, her great uncle, David Hauseman, and her sister, Gabby, providing the needed manpower. Not only was family involved, but members of her cross country team, Mario and Lucio Ojeda, from Northside Christian School in Saint Petersburg, FL, also spent the holiday in Blue Ridge helping with the project.

Over 240 people participated on Thanksgiving Day. Each runner was asked to provide a canned good as part of the entry fee. Feed Fannin was the recipient of these products. Tommy Jones was the overall winner with a time of 18:30.02 and the women's winner was Donna Garcia, whose time was 19:20.40. To learn more about this annual event, go to www.blueridgeturkeytrot.com. TMar2,ZJ/CA

Fishing for a cause

Where: Ledford Chapel Boat Ramp. When: Sat. March 26th. Time: 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Breakfast & sign-in starting @ 5:30 a.m.)

Entry Fee is \$50 per boat. Blast off will be drawn @ 6:50 a.m. Early registration will get you and your partner 5 tickets in the door prize draw.

All donations are appreciated and accepted. Thanks for supporting our cause!

All proceeds will benefit Towns County's Relay For Life. Anyone who would like to participate in this event or to volunteer please call: 706-897-3228 or email Crossfam27@gmail.com. TMar2,FJ/SH

New Al-Anon meetings/times

New times and meetings for Al-Anon/Ala Teen. Family Group Meetings are as follows: Al-Anon: 7 p.m. Sunday night, Chatuge Regional Hospital, Hiawassee, GA; Al-Anon: 8 p.m. Monday night, "The Mustard Seed", 12 Step and Twelve Tradition meeting at Mountain Presbyterian

Church, Blairsville; new Ala Teen meeting: 8 p.m. Wednesday night at Mountain Presbyterian Church, Blairsville; Al-Anon: 8 p.m. Wednesday night at Mountain Presbyterian Church, Blairsville; Al-Anon 12 noon Tuesday, Sharp Memorial UMC, Young Harris. Al-Anon is open to any

one who has been affected by another person's drinking. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or a friend.

Call 706-835-5827, 706-897-0628 or 828-389-8981 for more information. TMar2,ZJ/CA