



Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Indians bid farewell to seniors, baseball season



Left to right, Brett Bradshaw, Billy Meier, Alan Turpin, Devin Henderson, Kyle McConnell and Tayler Denton. Photo by James Reese.

By James Reese
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Kyle McConnell did everything he could to go out a winner in his last varsity baseball game for Towns County. The senior first baseman smacked three home runs and drove in five runs, but, unfortunately, it wasn't enough as the Tribe lost 10-9 to the Hiwassee Dam Eagles in the season finale in Ranger. McConnell's feat of three home runs in a game ties a team record believed to be held by three former Indians, Michael Kimsey, Brad Wilson and Ryan Nichols.

Towns County High School Principal Roy Perrin said that he was certain that at least, McConnell had tied a school record for most home runs in a single game. For certain, McConnell

has tied Kimsey, who stroked three home runs against Commerce.

Former long-time Indians' Head Coach Larry Kimsey said he was almost 99 percent sure that Wilson and Nichols had achieved a similar feat with the long ball.

Regardless, McConnell's feat in the final game of his high school career will be one that is remembered for years to come, especially by McConnell and his family.

Earlier in the week, Senior Day turned out to be one of those days that most senior baseball players will likely try to forget.

The Lakeview Academy Lions came to town and they were loaded for bear.

The Lions, vying for the fourth and final playoff spot out of Region 8-A with Athens Christian, took it to the Indians

and walked away with a less than memorable 12-0 region victory.

Due to pending inclement weather, the Towns County versus Hebron Academy match up was cancelled.

The Indians didn't seem too disappointed by not getting to play the No. 1 ranked team in Class A baseball.

They did however, seem disappointed that the season had come to a close. The Indians had come on strong in recent weeks, as the bats and pitching began to equal each other.

The Indians finished with a dismal 5-17 season record.

They bade farewell to seniors Alan Turpin, Taylor Denton, Billy Meier, Kyle McConnell, Brett Bradshaw, and Devin Henderson.

If effort equaled victories, this team would be state champions.



Taylor Denton uncorks a fastball against Lakeview Academy. Photo by James Reese.



Alan Turpin serves up a strike in the Indians match up with Lakeview Academy. Photo by James Reese.



Billy Meier tries to leg out an infield hit. Photo by James Reese.



Kyle McConnell serves up a curveball against the Lions. Photo by James Reese.



Devin Henderson looks for his pitch against the Lions. Photo by James Reese.



Brett Bradshaw takes his cuts against Lakeview Academy. Photo by James Reese.

Indians ready for spring football practice next week



Coach Kyle Langford believes the young 2011 Indians will match up well with their counterparts. Photo by Lowell Nicholson.

By James Reese
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The opening game of the 2011 high school football season is just 18 short weeks away.

Sure, four and a half months seems like a long time, but if you're Towns County Indians Head Coach Kyle Langford and you're getting ready for Union County, it doesn't seem like a long time at all.

The Indians line up on Aug. 26 against the Panthers, but before they get that far along, they'll be looking to play the annual Blue and White Game.

That's right, Spring Football Practice begins next week and no one is looking forward to that moment more than Coach Langford.

"The biggest thing that we're excited about is the guys that we've got coming back," he said. "We have a good number of kids returning. We've got 21 coming back and that's encouraging."

Langford touts the return of rising sophomore quarterback Jackson Noblet, who learned the high school game by the seat of his pants as a freshman.

"We got a couple of keys pieces, and when you have your quarterback returning, it's great," he said. "Last year Jackson Noblet threw for more than 1,000 yards and ran for almost 800 yards. That's a lot of offense coming back."

"Then you've got Noah Calhoun, Joseph Foster and Cody Smedley back to run the ball," he said. "That's all good right there. Zach Stroud was our leading offensive threat running and catching and he'll be back."

Offensively, Coach Langford said that the Indians must find more offensive depth out of some other players.

"That will be a major emphasis for us," he said. "I think some of these young guys are going to get a crack at it. Upfront on the offensive line, every guy that will start played at least one game last year. It's good that they've at least been there one time. So they know what to expect but this will be a very young offensive line."

"No seniors, but several sophomores that are very strong," he said. "Luke Parker will be starting for us. Wesley

Bloodworth, who started six games for us last year is back. We'll have good depth there. It's going to be, in my opinion, probably the strongest player-for-player line we've ever had as far as weight room measureables. They're all big good sized boys. We've got to make sure they're ready to play there."

Defensively, the Indians lose a couple of keys players in the secondary, Coach Langford said.

"But we'll still have Zach Stroud and Brett Barrett," he said. "Zach ended up starting at corner for us. Brett started from day one at corner. With those guys starting at the corner positions, we're going to have to find a free safety."

"At linebacker we've got everyone but Landon Harris coming back," he said. "We have Joseph Foster, Cody Smedley and Wesley Bloodworth."

The major concern, Langford said, will be the defensive line.

"We lost so many good ones from last year," he said. "We've got Jeremy Stephens coming back for us. After that we're just going to have to find some guys."

"Some one always steps up; we've just got to find that right person for the job," he said. "I can't say how many players we'll have out because I won't know until next Monday. I feel good about the guys that are going to work in the weight room. They're certainly ready to go."

Lady Indians lose a heartbreaker in state soccer playoffs

By James Reese
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It was the first playoff game in the history of Frank McClure Stadium. The Towns County Lady Indians were loose and ready to take on their opponent from Area 2-A. It didn't take long for the Lady Indians to realize this one wouldn't be a cake walk.

Rather, the Lady Indians (6-4-2) were about to face one of the toughest opponents of 2011. Unfortunately, it was in the first game of the state playoffs.

The Lady Indians took on the Lady Bobcats of Our Lady of Mercy, hailing from Fayetteville. The Lady Bobcats proved that they came to play, scoring within the first minute. Junior Jayla Johnson of the Lady Bobcats guided a breakaway shot past Towns County goal keeper Alex Fagin just 50 seconds into the contest.

Fagin, recently cleared to play after suffering from concussion-like symptoms, sported supportive headgear throughout the game in what could easily be sad to be a selfless performance.

Freshman Cherise Barandao soon followed with another goal giving the Lady Bobcats a 2-0 advantage.

Lady Indians' freshman Makayla Underwood the troops, as the Lady Indians refused to give up. Underwood scored just prior to the break, cutting the Lady Bobcats lead to 2-1. Johnson struck again with another goal with just under three minutes remaining before the half, giving the Lady Bobcats a 3-1 lead.

Returning from the break, Lady Bobcat senior goalie Caitlin Studley denied several great shots from Underwood, Faithe Robinson and Ali Bleckley.

Lady Bobcats' freshman Nahyo Jalajel booted a decisive goal to give the Bobcats a 4-1 lead that they would never relinquish, with just less than three minutes remaining. With Studley rejecting practically every shot sent her way, the Lady Indians were unable to mount a late rally and the Bobcats maintained the 4-1 victory.

Lady Indians Head Coach Peter Byrne said he was proud of his young soccer team, but, even he expected the team to advance to the next round.

"They obviously had the better team on this day," he said.



Junior Ali Bleckley takes aim with a corner kick. Photo by James Reese.



Makayla Underwood narrows the gap against the Lady Bobcats with a well deserved goal. Photo by James Reese.



Towns County goal keeper Alex Fagin gives a thumbs up after making a crucial stop against the Lady Bobcats. Photo by James Reese.

Chatuge Shores Ladies Golf Association opening day is May 3rd

We would like to welcome anyone that would like to come and play to please join us any Tuesday morning. Our first tee time is 9 a.m., if you wish to play just be there by 8:30 a.m.

Our tournament chairman is Sandy Navarre and her phone # is 828-361-5728 and

if you wish to play just give her a call before Monday evening and she will sign you up to play.

We welcome any and all golfers to come and see how friendly and welcoming our girls are. As a first time guest, the golf course has agreed to

let you play for \$20, so please come and join us.

We play for a little competition, but mostly fun. You don't have to be a member of Chatuge Shores Golf Club to belong to our association. Come out and play, we would love to have you.

Local Racing Action

By: Carl Vanzura



Ricky Smith won the Street feature at Tri-County.



Chase Elliott will one day race with Jeff Gordon and Jimmie Johnson.

Chase Elliott joins Hendrick Motorsports

Hendrick Motorsports sign Chase Elliott to a multi-year contract. Elliott, the son of 1988 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series champion Bill Elliott, and former Union County Middle School student, will continue to compete for his family-owned team until meeting age requirements for entering NASCAR national series events. Bill Elliott Racing, based in Dawsonville, Ga., will field Chevrolets with support from Hendrick Motorsports.

"The apple hasn't fallen far from the tree with Chase," said Rick Hendrick, owner of Hendrick Motorsports. "I've always admired Bill's ability in a race car and how he handled himself with the fans. I see those same traits in Chase, with his natural driving talent and an awareness of what he needs to do away from the track to

be successful. He comes from a great racing family, and it shows.

"We think it's a terrific situation. Chase already has a strong support system in place (in Dawsonville) that will allow him to focus on his education and grow as a driver, and Hendrick Motorsports will provide whatever kind of assistance the Elliotts need in any area."

A 15-year-old freshman in high school, Elliott already has competed against some of the best short-track racers in the United States. In 40 late model starts last season, he posted 13 victories, 27 top-five finishes and 37 top-10s.

"I've always been taught that teamwork and people are important, and that's something Mr. Hendrick really believes in," Elliott said. "Everyone at Hendrick Motorsports has high standards and takes a lot of pride in what they do. Racing with all

of their support, and the support of my family, is going to be incredible. I'm going to work really hard to make them proud and make the most of this opportunity."

In 2010, Elliott became the youngest driver to win the Blizzard Series at Five Flags Speedway in Pensacola, Fla., the Miller Lite Series at Mobile (Ala.) International Speedway and the overall Sunoco Gulf Coast championship. The Dawsonville native also posted victories in the prestigious Winchester 400 and at the reopening of historic North Wilkesboro (N.C.) Speedway.

Elliott already is two-for-two in 2011 after sweeping the Speedfest late-model features last month at Lanier National Speedway in Braselton, Ga. This season, he plans to enter a combination of super late model, pro late model and NASCAR regional touring series events. Thursday night at Richmond Speedway in Denny Hamlin's Charity Race shown on SPEED TV, Elliott placed third behind Hamlin and Micheal Waltrip in a car schealed for Kasey Kahne who had foot surgery and decided not to drive. (Information for this article came courtesy of Elliott's web-page)

On this week's dirt action, Tri-County announced that they have put a \$300 bounty out for anybody that can beat Danny Ledford who has won three Super Late Model features in a row. Tri-County races this Friday night. Blairsville car owner Randy Shoppe saw his driver Shannon Beardin win the Limited feature Saturday night at North Georgia Speedway. Ricky Williams won at Dixie Speedway and Lamar Scoggins won at Boyd's Speedway. The big show at Cleveland Speedway was canceled due to the tornado that touched down close to the track.