

# Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports



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## Indians close out 2010 on a hot streak

By Charles Duncan  
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Matt Beni wasn't quite perfect.

However, the senior right-hander almost did the unthinkable on Friday as the Towns County Indians' baseball team celebrated Senior Day with a lights out performance against Tallulah Falls.

Beni was perfect through three innings before giving up a walk and hitting a batter in the fourth inning. Beni and Alan Turpin combined on a 1-hitter to stifle the Indians from Tallulah Falls.

Beni wasn't shy, he knew he had a no-hitter brewing and he kept going to the hill in the top half of each inning with the goal of keeping the no-no intact.

"I felt great," he said. "I'll always remember this game, I'll never forget it."

In the midst of the no-hitter, Tallulah Falls did manage to touch Beni for a handful of walks, a sacrifice fly and a run that was surrendered via bases on balls during a wild spell for the senior right-hander.

Before the final frame, Indians Head Coach Shannon Moss asked Beni if he could handle one more inning. Beni, who tied a school record with four strikeouts in one inning, just shook his head.

"Coach did the right thing," said Beni, who was lifted for Turpin, also a right-hander. "I was out of gas, he knew it and I knew it."

The Indians scored early and often, striking for a four-spot in the bottom of the first.

Tallulah Falls' bats were punchless as Beni kept their hitters off-balance with his less than blazing fastball.

The hits kept coming for the Towns County Indians.

Senior John Bleckley helped Beni relax early on, driving in three runs in his first two at bats with a run-scoring triple, followed later by a double.

"I thought I might have had an inside-the-park home run on that triple, but coach told me to hold up," Bleckley said. "It was early, so better safe than sorry."

"It was a great feeling to walk away from the game with this kind of experience," he said. "I'm just glad that we finally got some good weather to play in."

Everyone joined in on the hit parade from James Mullins, Houston Moss and Taylor Denton to Turpin, Billy Meier and yes, even the pitcher Beni. Jake Mullins utilized his speed and quickness on the base paths in Moss' stead. Brett Bradshaw and Kyle McConnell did a stellar job of hitting and fielding throughout the game.

Jimmy Pearce continued his hot hitting and collected



Alan Turpin gets a lead off third as the Indians battered the Tallulah Falls pitching staff on Friday. The Indians dominated their region rivals 14-2 in the season finale. The Indians finished the season 8-14. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Jimmy Pearce had no problem with Tallulah Falls' pitching staff. Pearce was a force at the plate, collecting three hits in Towns' 14-2 win over Tallulah Falls. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Senior Day was special for right-hander Matt Beni. The senior tossed a gem with a little help from right-hander Alan Turpin. The Indians went on to win 14-2. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

three hits. Beni said he was proud to go out a winner and even more proud to have played baseball for Coach Moss.

"The guys made a few plays out there behind me today," he said. "We couldn't have one this without a team effort."

"Coach Moss is a really dedicated coach," Beni said. "I'm proud to have been a part of this experience with him."

Moss said he wasn't excited that the season was over. However...

"We were glad that it could end on a positive note," he said. "Matt came out and did what he needed to do. He did a good job for us early on in the season. He hit a few rough spots here and there, we had an up and down season."

"But that's what the experience is all about, working through the rough times and living for the good times," he said. "I've told these guys many times that baseball is like life. There are lots of ups and downs, but if you keep at it,



Matt Beni dominated the Tallulah Falls Indians in his final game as a Towns County Indian. Beni had a basketful of strikeouts, including a school record four in one inning as Towns defeated Tallulah Falls 14-2. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

you'll get to the end prize."

The day before, the Indians whipped up on the Blue Ridge Bobcats out of Blue Ridge, NC by a score of 13-1.

"These guys made it through some tough times and that's what you've got to do," he said. "Good pitching, good hitting and good results."

TMAY5, TCHS SPTS 2Jae

## Are you ready for some football? The Indians are!

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A deflated Wilson football rests in the Towns County High School athletics' trophy case, a memento of a time that stands still in local lore.

In precise, clear inscription, the date Sept. 24, 1993 stands out. That was the night of the Indians' only football conquest over the Union County Panthers by a score of 27-17.

At the time, it was considered Towns County's greatest football triumph of all time. Of course that was long before Kyle Langford ever came to town.

On Monday, a group of young energetic eighth and ninth graders gathered for one of the most revered rites of spring - collecting their football practice gear. Spring Football is back and the Indians are anxious for spring to turn to fall.

Langford, the Indians' head football coach, met with the youngsters for about a half-hour in the team's film room to discuss the 10 days of Spring Football. Langford is excited and with good reason. His high school football team roster boasts 55 players; his middle school roster is swelled with 52 athletes.

"We hope the numbers hold," Coach Langford said. "Only time will tell that, but we're very excited about the whole program."

It's heady stuff in Towns County where football has traditionally taken a backseat to basketball and baseball. Langford has instilled pride in a pigskin program that once was considered among the worst in the state.

"I think the first year I got here, we had 40 kids in both the high school and middle school programs," Coach



The Towns County Indians are gearing up for 10 days of Spring Football Practice. By Thursday, almost 60 gridiron performers will be on the TCHS practice field working together. On May 14, the annual Blue and White Spring Football game is on tap at 5 p.m. at Frank McClure Stadium. Tickets are on sale at C & J Mountain Outfitters. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Langford said. "Now we're sitting here with a little over 100 kids. That's very encouraging. We're on the right track."

The youthful Indians looked at the football schedule handed out by their head coach. Neighboring Union County is on the list and this time, it's not a scrimmage game, it's the first game of 2010.

By Thursday, the youngsters will be joined by the rising juniors and seniors. On May 14th, the players will partake in the annual Blue and White game at Frank McClure Stadium.

"It's time for me to do what they pay me to do," Coach Langford said. "It's time to get this football team rolling and get this program where we want it at. I think we're off to a good start this year."

Coach Langford must replace some key skill position players.

"It's good to have players like Bill Meier and Taylor Denton to fall back on," he said. "It seems like those guys have been around here forever. But, yes, we've got to replace a quarterback and some key skill position players."

With the numbers up, Coach Langford expects a lot of competition in spring and summer camps.

"We're tickled that we've got some depth and experience on the offensive line this year," he said. "I think we've got some guys that can catch the ball. Defensively, we've got nine starters back from last year and we've got some good young guys that are going to push those fellows."

"I promise you, the cream will rise to the top," he said. "We're excited about the numbers and once we figure out what we've got and who goes where, that's when it's going to get real exciting."

Langford can't wait until the Blue and White game on May 14.

"I think they're going to be some stars born and some playmakers made that night," he said.

The Touchdown Club will have barbecue plates on sale and tickets to the event are already on sale at C&J Mountain Outfitters in Hiawassee.

"We're excited," Coach Langford said. TMAY5, TCHS SPTS 3Jae

## Jacob Turner named Men's Tennis Coach

Jacob Turner has been named head men's tennis coach at Young Harris College. YHC Director of Athletics Eric Geldart announced Wednesday.

"We are pleased to have Coach Turner join our athletics staff at Young Harris College," Geldart said. "He brings strong recruiting experience and a coaching background from an NCAA Division I program. Those are attributes that were very important in his selection as head men's tennis coach at Young Harris College as we move our athletics program to four-year status."

Turner said he is excited about the future of the college and his team.

"I'd like to thank Coach G for this opportunity to come and take over this program, and I plan to repay that faith he's shown in me by leading the team in the right direction," Turner said. "I look at Young Harris College and see a college going in the right direction, especially with the program aggressively pursuing NCAA Division II status."

The Mountain Lions' men's tennis program was revived this past season after a decade of inactivity. For Turner, the relative newness of the team was a motivator.

"Being able to put my ideas and stamp on a growing program was an opportunity that I couldn't pass up," he said.

Young Harris finished the season with a 20-12 overall record, and finished second in the NJCAA Region XVII

Tournament. YHC will move from junior college competition to the four-year level beginning this fall.

Turner comes to Young Harris after serving as an assistant coach for the men's team at NCAA Division I Kennesaw State University the past two years. Helping to start the brand new Owls men's program in 2008, Turner saw four of his players earn Scholar-Athlete honors from the Intercollegiate Tennis Association and the program earn the highest cumulative grade point average of any team on the KSU campus.

In addition, Turner was involved in the recruiting process of bringing to KSU what would be ranked as the 11th best mid-major recruiting class in the nation in 2009, according to respected website TennisRecruiting.net.

"As excited as I am to come to Young Harris College, I am sad to be leaving KSU and all the athletes and coaches there," Turner said. "But, I know that the program is in great hands with Coach (T.J.) Greggs and Coach (Brandon) Padgett. I want to thank them for the opportunity and the help they have given me."

Before joining the fledgling men's program at Kennesaw State, Turner was an assistant with the school's women's program during the 2007-08 academic year.

Prior to joining the KSU staff, Turner served as an assistant instructor at Harrison Tennis Center in Marietta, Ga., from 2003-2007.



Turner holds a United States Professional Tennis Registry certification, as well as Etcheberry Academy Certification for Strength and Conditioning in Tennis.

He is a decorated veteran of the United States Air Force, reaching the rank of staff sergeant. He served in Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany and South Korea.

Turner owns a bachelor's of science degree in sports management with a minor in coaching from Kennesaw State. He is currently pursuing a graduate degree in sports management from Georgia Southern University.

The Lafayette, La., native participates in United States Tennis Association sanctioned events.

He and his wife, Kim, a Marietta, Ga., native, currently live in Kennesaw, but will relocate to the Young Harris area this summer. TMAY5, TCHS SPTS 1Jae

## 4-H BB Shooting Team goes to state championships



Towns County 4-H Sharpshooters proudly display the trophies they won at the recent competition in Monroe, GA, near Athens on April 17. Eleven Towns County Sharpshooters competed all day long in relays, all vying for the coveted slots at the upcoming state championships at Rock Eagle 4-H headquarters near Macon on May 1.

Over 100 4-Hers shot all day in the sun and heat hoping for slots in the state championships. Seven NRA certified Firearms Instructors from the Chatuge Gun Club have taken the teams from Towns County 4-H to the state championships 6 out of the last 10 years.

Trophies and customized shirts were provided for the kids by the Sons of the American Legion (sponsor), American Legion Ladies Auxiliary, along with donations from the match with the Sheriff's Deputies. (No comment

on who won that match.)

Sharpshooters were Jessie Patrick, McKenzie Henderson, William Lovelady, Reed Moss, Walker Ross, Danielle Nguyen, Phillip

Lowell, Keanu Nguyen, Kane Hoffman, Kenny Sutton and Savannah Holdaway.

Towns County should be very proud of these kids. Submitted by Rob Stoneham.

## TCCC 4th annual golf tournament

The Tri-County Community College (TCCC) Foundation will hold its Fourth Annual Golf Tournament at The Ridges in Hayesville on Saturday, May 15.

This four person, best ball, shotgun start tournament will begin at 9 a.m. Registration fee is \$75 per person and that includes green fees, cart and a complimentary gift.

"Our tournament has grown each year and this year we are offering a guaranteed payout of \$3,500 in cash and prizes," said Dr. Terrie M. Kelly, Executive Director of the TCCC Foundation. "All the proceeds from the tournament will be directed to the Foundation fund that supports college

and community-based events and projects."

Kelly said tournament entrants will be able to shoot a full practice round on Friday May 14, the day before the event, for \$35. She said that price includes green fees and a cart.

The event will include a "Hole-in-One" contest and other prizes for "Longest drive" (men and women); and "Closest to the Pin" (men and women). Kelly said there will also be a "Putting" contest and assorted door prizes.

Pre-registration is now open. For more information, please contact Dotie Ortega 835-4208 or Monica Holley at 835-4280. N(May5, Y4)SH

## Vipers are Tournament Champions



Front: Paisley Staton, Gracie Long, Breanna Rogers, Kiersten Cox, Cheyanna Penland. Back: Wade Benson, Brittany Ledford, Haley Reaux, Anna Grace Roach, Audrey Rogers, Rachel Benson, Doc Staton