

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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## Indians rally past Tallulah Falls, fall to Athens Christian comeback

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Life on the road can be very rewarding for high school basketball teams when coming away with a comeback victory and it can be quite tough when being victimized by a rousing comeback and coming out on the short end of a close game. This turned out to be the case for the Towns County Indians varsity basketball team in both categories last week in games at Region 8-A foes Tallulah Falls on Tuesday and Athens Christian on Friday.

The Indians extended a very impressive winning streak to eight games with a 65-61 victory at Tallulah but came short in the final seconds in a 67-65 contest in Athens with the week's work completing their regular season with a fine 16-7 overall record, including 7-3 and in a tie for second place in the eleven team Region 8-A.

The negative effect the loss at Athens Christian could have had on this week's region tournament seeding for the Indians was actually eliminated when Hebron Christian Academy of Dacula fell by a 70-61 score the same evening at Lakeview Academy in Gainesville. The Indians and Hebron had been tied entering the Friday games for second place and a Hebron victory coupled with the Indians loss would have given Hebron the second seed in the upcoming Region 8-A tournament this week in Commerce.

With the Hebron loss to Lakeview, however, Towns and Hebron remained tied for second place with the Indians holding the tie breaker provision attained by defeating Hebron in their only encounter with each other in Dacula and being seeded second in this week's region tournament in Commerce. The Indians will face the winner of a Monday game between Athens Academy and Commerce at 5:30 pm on Wednesday of this week reaching the tournament semi-finals at Commerce on Friday and the winner of that game reaching the tournament finals on Saturday.

As for state tournament play, much is left to be determined based on the Power Points ratings being used for the final year to qualify teams for the Class A Public State Tournament as well as set the seedings for the teams. At this writing, the Indians are in ninth place in the ratings but with a minuscule difference in their being as high as seventh or as low as the twelfth position.

Results of the region tournaments played around the state this week are sure to have significant effect on the seedings with this especially being true for lower rated teams that may win their tournament and be elevated to near the top of the ratings. More up to date information will be provided in next week's newspaper.

**Indians 66, Tallulah Falls 61** – At Tallulah Falls, Indians junior Kolby Moss would use field goals to force 2-2 and 4-4 ties by the 6:08 mark of the first quarter but the Tallulah band of Indians would use a trey for a 7-4 lead at the 5:50 mark as a trigger for a 7-1 run and an 11-4 lead which they would hold, including by as much as ten points, until near the end of the third quarter. Moss took the scoring lead for the Indians during the first quarter with twelve of the Indians' points with Tallulah holding an 18-13 lead at quarter's end.

After an early second quarter drive for two points by junior Colton Day got the Indians within 18-15, Tallulah would hold leads of 22-16 and 28-19 by the 3:14 mark before a deuce by sophomore Kyle Oakes and a trey by junior Aidan Berrong got the Indians within 28-24 at 1:19. Tallulah would then wrap treys around a deuce by Moss and add a deuce for a 36-26 lead at the seven seconds mark. A deuce by Berrong at the halftime buzzer would give the Indians a big boost,



Towns County suffered a narrow 67-65 loss at Athens Christian last Friday night in the regular season finale. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

however, for just a 36-28 Tallulah advantage at intermission.

Although it would not be an easy task by any stretch of the imagination in view of the eight points halftime deficit, the Indians would pretty much own the second half of the game, eventually outscoring Tallulah 38-25. The turnaround for the Indians began when sophomore Collin Crowder drove the lane for a three point play at the 7:21 mark reducing the Tallulah lead to 36-31 with this being the first of five times the Indians would score three points at a time in a 15-8 third quarter opening run.

Two treys by Moss at the 6:52 and 6:13 marks followed a deuce by Tallulah for just a 38-37 deficit for the Indians. Tallulah would respond with a pair of deuces for a 42-37 lead at the 4:49 mark but junior Luis Quijada and Berrong followed by wrapping treys around a Tallulah deuce for just a 44-43 Tallulah lead at 3:26.

Crowder came up with a steal on an inbound pass near midcourt and took the ball to the basket following a Tallulah free throw for a 45-45 tie at 1:18 and Moss matched a drive for two Tallulah points by sinking a runner at the buzzer for a 47-47 standoff entering the fourth quarter.

A drive to the basket at the 7:20 mark by Berrong got the Indians a 49-47 lead, actually their first of the game and one they would not relinquish but with the game to be in doubt until the final minute of play as it turned out. A three point play by Moss at 5:28 got the Indians a 52-47 lead only to have Tallulah sink a trey just twelve seconds later for a 52-50 Towns advantage.

Both teams would go scoreless for more than three minutes of playing time after that with the Indians killing some time during the span but Tallulah missing a one and one free throw attempt before a runner by Moss at 2:12 got the Indians ahead 54-50. With Berrong having gotten his fourth foul at the 6:05 mark and going to the bench for awhile, Moss was called for his third and fourth fouls with both coming at the 2:01 mark with Tallulah initially missing a one and one shot but Moss charged with a foul on the rebound.

Tallulah missed again on a one and one attempt but came up with a loose ball following the miss and sank at deuce for just a 54-52 Indians lead at the 1:55 mark. A three point play by Moss at 53.4 seconds had the Indians leading 59-54 only to have Tallulah strike for a three point play at 46.6 seconds and knocking on the door again with just a 59-57 deficit.

But Moss would sink a pair of free throws at 44.4 seconds and add two more at 28.3 following a missed trey attempt by Tallulah for a 63-57 Towns lead and he wasn't through yet. Tallulah scored on a drive for the basket at twenty three

seconds to close to within 63-59 but Moss added two more free throws at 21.1 seconds, giving him ten straight in the quarter for a 65-59 Indians lead.

A putback basket by Tallulah at twelve seconds reduced the Towns lead to 65-61 but Moss sank the second of two free throw attempts at 4.4 seconds to set the final score at 66-61 as the Indians came away with what has been a typical season of close finishes. When the dust had cleared, Moss had scored the final seventeen points for the Indians following Berrong's quarter opening basket that got them the lead they would not relinquish.

Moss led the Indians in scoring with a career high 39 points with other scoring leaders being Berrong with 10 points, Crowder with 8, and Oakes with 4 while the quintet of Berrong, Crowder, Moss, Oakes, and Quijada tied for the lead in assists with 2 each. Leaders in rebounds were Oakes with 5 and the trio of Berrong, Crowder, and Quijada with 4 each while Oakes led in steals with 4 and Berrong had 1 blocked shot. Scoring leaders for Tallulah Falls were seniors Hayden Johnson with 25 points and Matthew Weidner with 14.

Tallulah finished regular season play by taking a 72-52 home court win over Athens Academy on Friday to extend their record to 10-12, including 6-4 in region play and a tie for fourth place with Riverside Military Academy with Riverside holding the tie breaker by virtue of a 48-47 victory in Gainesville over Tallulah.

**Athens Christian 67, Indians 65** – This has been a season marked by rousing scoring runs by the Indians and their opponents and the Indians' game at Athens Christian proved to be another in the series. It appeared by late in the second quarter that the Indians were on their way to a dominant victory over the home standing Eagles but perhaps the ease of an outstanding scoring run brought about some overconfidence and maybe some loss of focus against a very talented team.

Following a basket by sophomore Collin Crowder for a quick 2-0 Towns lead, Athens Christian would use a trey, a free throw and a deuce for a 6-2 lead at the 5:46 mark of the first quarter and follow deuces by junior Kolby Moss and Crowder for a 6-6 standoff with a basket for an 8-6 lead at the 4:07 mark.

But the Indians would seize complete control of the game for the final half of the first quarter and most of the second. They finished the first quarter on an 11-3 run highlighted by two free throws and a deuce by Crowder for a 10-8 Towns lead and field goals by junior Aidan Berrong, sophomore Kyle Oakes, and junior Luis Quijada for a 17-11 lead at quarter's end.

The onslaught continued in the second quarter as the Indians began with a 10-0 run begun and ended by deuces by Berrong with Crowder scoring six points in between on two free throws and two deuces as the Indians had a 27-11 lead at the 5:19 mark. After the Eagles wrapped a pair of treys around a putback basket by Moss for a 29-15 Indians lead at 4:04, the Indians used a 9-4 run highlighted by a deuce and trey by Moss and ending with a trey by Berrong for a 38-19 Towns lead at the 1:20 mark of the second quarter.

The Eagles would come alive after this, however, sinking three of four free throw attempts, a deuce, and a long trey at the buzzer for an 8-0 finish and just a 38-27 deficit at intermission. The good fortune for the Eagles continued at the start of the third quarter as they used a pair of treys and four deuces in a 14-7 opening run interrupted by four for four free throw shooting by Moss and a deuce and free throw by Crowder in edging to within 45-41 at the 4:46 mark.

The Indians responded with a 7-2 run on deuces by Moss and Oakes and a free throw and deuce by Berrong for a 52-43 lead at the 1:11 mark but the Eagles sank a trey at 39 seconds for a 52-46 Towns lead entering the fourth quarter. The fourth quarter would see both teams make some big plays with the Indians responding positively to most of the challenges by the Eagles.

When the Eagles sank a deuce on a putback basket less than half a minute into the quarter, Crowder answered with a deuce at 7:12 for a 54-48 Indians lead and Moss responded to a three point play and two free throws by the Eagles for a 54-53 score with a trey and deuce at the 5:38 and 5:12 marks for a 59-53 Towns lead, the same margin as at the start of the quarter.

A three point play followed by the Eagles at 4:08 for a 59-56 Indians lead but Crowder sank two free throws at 3:46 with the Indians leading 61-56 only to have the Eagles strike for a trey at 2:51 to edge to within 61-59. Crowder sank the second of two free throw attempts at 2:35 for a 62-59 Indians lead and Moss sank the second of two attempts following a pair of Eagle free throws with the Indians leading 63-61 at 2:03.

But when the Eagles came up with a loose ball and field goal at the 1:49 mark and added the second of two free throws at 1:11, they had a 64-63 lead. Moss got the Indians back in front 65-64 with a drive to the basket for a deuce at fifty six seconds. A putback basket by the Eagles to be addressed later got the Eagles a 66-65 lead they would not relinquish at the thirty seconds mark as the Indians would miss a deuce attempt for the lead and a trey attempt for a potential win at the buzzer following a free

throw by the Eagles for a 67-65 Athens lead which became the final score.

The Eagles must certainly be commended for their rousing comeback in taking a close victory and it would be great for your reporter if this were the full story but it would not be complete as it was difficult for the Indians and their followers to have the deciding Eagles basket come in the manner that occurred. With the Indians clinging to a 65-64 lead near the half minute mark and the Eagles missing a field goal attempt, many if not most folks viewing the game probably saw an Eagle push outstanding Indians rebounder Crowder out of bounds to the point of falling down, leaving the Eagle open to take the rebound and score an uncontested putback shot that turned out to be the decisive basket in the game for the previously mentioned 66-65 Eagles lead.

The lack of a foul call as a result of heavy contact might not have drawn as much attention if not for numerous light touch fouls being called on the Indians throughout the game but increasingly noticeable in the fourth quarter. It was clear to the Indians and their followers at least that the push should have negated the Eagles field goal and sent Crowder to the other end of the court for two free throws on a double bonus with the Indians still leading by a 65-64 score. Of course, no one will ever know what might have happened during the re-

mainder of the game if the call had been made but the Indians and their followers would have liked to have seen what would have happened and felt more content about a loss if it had occurred with the foul call having been made.

Scoring leaders for the Indians for the game were Crowder and Moss with 23 points each, Berrong with 12, and Oakes with 5 while leaders in assists were Moss and Oakes with 4 each and Crowder with 3. Leaders in rebounds were Oakes with 8, Crowder with 7, Berrong with 5, Day with 4, and Moss and Quijada with 3 each while Crowder led in steals with 3 and Berrong blocked 1 shot. Scoring leaders for Athens Christian were senior Jarrett Boyd with 30 points, freshman Evan Ivester with 20, and junior RJ Leverette with 10. The sharp shooting Boyd has agreed to attend Emmanuel College in Franklin Springs to play basketball. The win was the fourth in a row for the Eagles who completed regular season play with a 10-11 overall record, including 4-6 in Region 8-A as the eighth seeded team for the region tournament.

At the risk of belaboring the point, a quick look will be provided about the light touch foul situation present this season for the Indians in just this game and the early season game many will recall being played at Hiwassee Dam with very similar free throw shooting totals. In the game at Hiwassee Dam, the home standing Eagles were just 15 for a whopping 35 at the foul line while the Indians were 18 for 23 compared to the Athens Christian game with this group of Eagles sinking just 16 of 34 attempts and the Indians 16 of 23 but in the fourth quarter prior to what turned out to be the winning basket, the Eagles were seven for twelve as compared to just four for six for the Indians.

In referring to light touch fouls being called, no more than twenty free throw attempts have been made by any teams against the Indians except for in these two games and by Hebron Christian who went 19 for 28 for the charity stripe compared to 24 for 31 by the Indians in that game. Further, in just six of twenty two prior games did the Indians' opponents attempt more free throws than the Indians who tend to draw quite a few fouls through their style of play of driving to the basket and their winning a lot of close games with teams fouling them in the hope for enough misses to overcome TCHS leads.

**Correction** - Senior Ali Momin was misidentified as Luis Quijada in last week's newspaper.

## Register now for Rec Department Baseball/Softball

Towns County Recreation Department Baseball/Softball registration: January 1st - February 16th. Late registration: February 17th - March 1st - \$15 late fee. The Towns County Recreation Department would like to invite you to participate in our inaugural season with GRPA. There will be evaluations held the second week of March. If you are interested in coaching, please fill out a coaching application at the Towns County Recreation Department & complete a MANDATORY background check ONLY after you have been selected as a coach.

Divisions: T-Ball: Ages 5-6 Born September 1st, 2013 to August 31st, 2015. 8u: Ages

7-8 Born September 1st, 2011 to August 31st, 2013. 10u: Ages 9-10 Born September 1st, 2009 to August 31st, 2011. 12u: Ages 11-12 Born September 1st, 2007 to August 31st, 2009. 14u: Ages 13-14 Born September 1st, 2005 to August 31st, 2007.

Please register online at www.TownsCountyRec.com or register in person at the Towns County Recreation Department.

Towns County Recreation Department will be providing jerseys, pants & adjustable hats that players will be able to keep at the end of the season. If you have any questions please contact Matthew Youngblood or Tyler Garrett at (706) 896-2600 or by email at TCRecreation2600@gmail.com.