

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Three Towns County wrestlers medal in state traditional tournament

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Assistant Editor

Blaine Rogers has broken through a ceiling in Towns County Wrestling by becoming the first grappler from Towns County High School to wrestle in a state finals match.

Rogers, a junior, placed second in the 160-pound weight class during the 2018 GHSA Traditional Wrestling State Tournament over the Feb. 9 weekend, and he was joined by his friends and classmates down in Macon.

Junior Tyler Swanger placed fourth in state at 170 pounds, and senior Harold Cox finished fifth at 220 pounds.

Freshman Garrett Oakes qualified to wrestle in the state tournament, and though he did not place in the Centreplex, like his fellow returning wrestlers, he'll take his experience with him into the next season.

"We qualified four, and it's as many as we've ever qualified for traditionally as a group in the current format," said Indian Head Coach Jeff Stowers. "I felt like we had a good chance to



Left: Blaine Rogers (second from right) on the podium after placing second in Macon. Right: Towns County wrestling poses for a group photo at the State Championships.

have some placers. "Everybody wrestled about as good as we can wrestle. We had our first ever state finalist when Blaine Rogers got in the finals for Saturday and had a chance to wrestle for a state title against an amazing wrestler from Commerce.

"He came up a little short, but we've been trying for a long time to get somebody in the finals. Blaine was able to push through and get there."

Coach Stowers was joined by assistant coaches Brandon Rowland and Jim Harrison, and everyone enjoyed the experi-



ence, especially the kids, who got to shine for a weekend right alongside the best of the best.

"It was good to see those kids work that hard, and our veteran kids get the rewards for their hard work all year long," said Coach Stowers. "The future for our program is certainly bright.

"I feel like a big monkey has been lifted off our back with somebody in the finals. It wouldn't surprise me next year to have three kids in the finals. If Garrett goes down there and he's got a little more experience in those kind of environments, there's no doubt in my mind he

could have been in the finals."

Continued Stowers: "We've got some things to work on and some things to improve on, but I'm just super excited for those kids, and really happy for Harold, that he got to go out on a win and finish fifth. It was a great tournament for us."

Scoring woes result in season ending losses for Indians, Lady Indians to Athens Christian

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Last Monday's appearances by the Towns County Lady Indians and Indians varsity basketball teams against Athens Christian in the Region 8A Tournament in Commerce turned out to be difficult assignments. Of particular difficulty for both teams was an inability to consistently put points on the scoreboard as the Lady Indians fell by a 36-29 score and the Indians by a 53-40 margin with the losses ending the season for both teams.

By the end of the tournament, it turned out that the Lady Indians and Indians were not the only teams to have difficulty putting points on the scoreboard with several surprising results not only related to lower than expected point totals for several teams but upsets as well. It's easy to feel that teams let pressure get to them in scoring smaller point totals than normal for them but there is a likelihood that defensive strategy by the various teams against teams they had faced earlier may have been a primary reason for the low point totals.

In a season for both teams that will be remembered for "what might have been" as a result of the extended loss to injury of top players for both teams, the Lady Indians finished the season with a 6-19 record, including 4-9 in regular season region play, and the Indians with an overall 12-14 mark, including 6-9 in region play.

A few season wrapup items are planned for next week's Herald addressing Region 8A Tournament and other post season results along with a look at various factors involved in affecting the records of the Lady Indians and Indians due to injuries to key players.

Athens Christian School 36, Lady Indians 29 – The Lady Indians led for most of the game just three days prior against Athens Christian in their final regular season finale in taking an impressive 52-47 victory with both teams



The Towns County Lady Indians and Indians in action vs Athens Christian at last week's Region 8-A Tournament. Photos by Lowell Nicholson

scoring consistently throughout the game as evidenced by neither team scoring less than ten points in any quarter.

What a difference three days made on this occasion, however, when the two teams were faced with the unique task of squaring off against each other for the second game in a row in their opening round of the Region 8A Tournament. In contrast to the consistency in scoring for both teams three days prior, both teams got off to very difficult scoring starts in this game with multiple instances of potential turning points included but none taking effect until very late in the third quarter and briefly into the fourth.

The first potential turning point resulted from the Lady Indians going nearly ten and a half minutes without scoring at the start of the game. Fortunately, the Lady Eagles were off to a difficult start as well in sinking just three field goals and a free throw during the final 5:49 of the first quarter for a 7-0 lead at quarter's end.

The Lady Eagles would open the second quarter, however, with a pair of quick deuces for an 11-0 lead by the 6:26 mark only to see a po-

tential turning point for them turn into what could have been a rapid turning point by the Lady Indians. A trey by senior Madison McClure at the 5:36 mark triggered a very brief but dominant Lady Indians run brought about primarily by excellent full court pressure as they struck for an incredible ten straight points and just an 11-10 deficit in just a minute and two seconds of playing time ending at 4:34.

A field goal and two free throws by freshman Vanessa Floyd followed McClure's trey starting the scoring run and McClure sank a second trey at 4:34 in completing the run but the Lady Indians would not be able to maintain potential momentum for a turning point in the game. They did manage, however, to hold their own for the remainder of the quarter as they used a free throw by junior Taylor at 3:19 for an 11-11 tie, a charity toss by McClure at 1:47 for just a 13-12 deficit and a trey by Cornett at 1:02 for a 15-15 standoff at intermission.

The third quarter proved to be of difficulty similar to the first for both teams as the Lady Eagles managed just an old fashioned three points play at

5:25 and a deuce at 3:58 for a 20-15 lead. Floyd got the Lady Indians within 20-17 with a deuce at 1:16 but a turning point the Lady Indians would not be able to overcome began with just 1.3 seconds remaining in the third quarter and ended just a minute and one second into the fourth.

The Lady Eagles saw lady luck shine on them at that 1.3 seconds mark when the first of two free throws followed a pretty typical route of bouncing around the rim before falling in the basket but that point scored with some luck was compounded with the second being an inadvertent bank shot which also found its way in the basket for a 22-17 Athens lead entering the fourth quarter. The Lady Eagles weren't finished with good fortune, however, as it was their turn to get the ball on the alternate possession rule at the start of the fourth quarter and they sank a field goal at 7:45 for a sudden 24-17 lead which became a quite imposing 26-17 advantage at the 6:59 mark.

The Lady Indians would not go quietly but would not get closer than four points on one occasion and five on two occasions after that. A 5-0 Towns scoring run on three for four free throw shooting by McClure and a field goal by Floyd got them within 26-22 at 3:58, two free throws by sophomore Sophia Shook had them within 29-24 at 2:45, and a steal and half court run for a basket by Cornett at 1:38 reduced the margin to 31-26.

The Lady Eagles increased their lead to 35-26 on a field goal and two free throws



by the 24.7 seconds mark with a trey at thirteen seconds by Lady Indians freshman Shelby Morris reducing the margin to 35-29 with a free throw by Athens at 12.4 seconds setting the final winning margin for the Lady Eagles at 36-29. McClure led the Lady Indians in scoring with 10 points and was followed by Floyd with 8 and Cornett with 6 while Cornett and McClure contributed 2 assists each. Junior post player Kenzlee Denton was again unavailable due to an ankle injury sustained in the first quarter of the Lady Indians game nine days prior on January 27. The Lady Eagles were led in scoring by senior Madison Pickerel with 16 points.

Athens Christian School 53, Indians 40 – After finishing a play-in game against host Commerce on Saturday just two days prior on a 67-30 scoring run following a 19-2 Commerce start for a 69-49 victory, it appeared for much of the first half against Athens Christian on Monday of last week that the Indians were on their way to a continuation of the success against Commerce and potentially avenging a 54-51 loss to Athens Christian just three days prior in the regular season finale for both teams.

The Indians used a steal and pass by senior Zach Davenport to senior Evan Berong for a 2-0 lead just fifteen seconds into the game and a putback basket by junior Will Travis at the 5:59 mark got the Indians a 4-2 lead and on their way to a 12-4 advantage, highlighted by four points each by Davenport and Travis, which became 12-6 at quarter's end.

The Indians held leads of 14-8 on a Davenport field goal, 16-10 on a basket by freshman

Kolby Moss, and 19-13 on a three points play by Travis by the 3:42 mark of the second quarter but a trey, a three points play and a free throw by the Eagles got them a 20-19 lead at the 1:57 mark. A Davenport trey at 1:43 and a deuce by senior Logan Cowart at thirty seven seconds got the Indians leads of 22-20 and 24-22 but a field goal by the Eagles as time expired forced a 24-24 standoff at intermission.

After the Eagles opened the third quarter with a 7-2 run for a 31-26 lead by the 5:34 mark, the Indians used an 8-4 rally highlighted by six points by Davenport to pull within 35-34 at 1:13. The Eagles would, however, sink a field goal at fifty four seconds for a 37-34 lead entering the fourth quarter and open that quarter with a 12-2 run for a 49-36 lead at 4:11 and an eventual 53-40 victory. Davenport sank four of six free throw attempts for the Indians in fourth quarter play.

Scoring leaders for the Indians for the game were Davenport with 19 points, Travis with 9, and Cowart and Moss with 4 each while seven different Indians contributed at least one assist with leaders being Davenport and Moss with 2 each.

Cowart deserves much praise from Indians followers for providing inspired but limited service, due to seven weeks of athletic inactivity following a stress fracture in his foot, in the Indians' two region tournament appearances. The Eagles were led in scoring by senior Kohl Phillips with 25 points.

Editors note: Next week's *Towns County Herald* Sports Section will feature look back at the 2017-18 basketball season

A.T. Program will benefit Hiawassee businesses

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) has developed a new program to help hikers find businesses that will assist them in the "Trail Towns" along the A.T. Route from Georgia to Maine.

Hiawassee became a Trail Town in 2011 and now this new program will give hikers information on-line at the ATC website that will help them find the businesses they need when reaching a town.

The program is free to any business wanting to participate. By filling out an application stating the business name, address, contact information, and the benefits the business offers hikers, each business will be listed on the ATC website, recognized via electronic media, display a Appalachian Trail Community Supporter storefront decal, and much more.

many of the hikers visit to 're-supply' Hiawassee is crowded with hikers wandering from the post office to the stores, restaurants, and places to spend a night or two as they complete their first State of the 14 they will hike through to reach Katahdin Mountain in Maine. Most of these hikers have never been in Georgia and definitely not in Hiawassee and they rely on electronic media to find a business that they need and the ATC website will be one of the first places they will look.

The benefits businesses provide are often hiker discounts, places to connect to the internet or re-charge electronics, supply needed hiker supplies, etc.

Any business that hasn't been contacted to participate can get a free application at the Towns County Chamber of Commerce. TFeb14.G1)SH

Baseball/softball registration

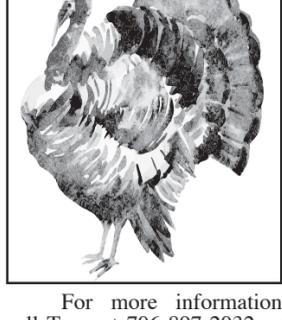
Recreation baseball/softball: We will offer the following age groups: Co-ed T-ball ages 5 - 6, Coach's Pitch ages 7 - 8, 10 and under, 12 and under, 14 and under. Registration will run through February 16th. Visit townscountyrec.com to sign up. TJan17.F1)SH

Turkey Calling Contest February 24

NWTF - Coopers Creek Sportsmen for Kids will host the Steve George Memorial Sanctioned Turkey Calling Contest on Saturday, February 24th at the Union County Civic Center. Doors will open at 10 a.m. Contest begins at 1 p.m. Lunch will be available.

There will be a 20 Gauge Youth Model Turkey Gun Raffle. Lots of great door prizes will also be distributed.

Come out and support Coopers Creek Sportsmen for Kids and hear some of the best callers from the south.



For more information call Tony at 706-897-2032 or Troy at 706-897-5211. TFeb14.Z1)CA

Free Hunter Education class



Cross Church, located at 2113 Baldview Rd., Young Harris on March 17 from 9 AM to 5 PM with a break for lunch. Instructors will be David Webb, Ranger First Class and other volunteer instructors.

Though walk-ins are welcome, you may pre-register online at www.gohuntgeorgia.com/hunting. A minimum of five students is required for the class to take place. TFeb14.F2)SH