

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Indians Baseball wins big at Riverside, performs well in Savannah



The Indians went 2-1 during their three-game road trip to Savannah last week. Photo/Lisa Oakes.

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Baseball, 3-1, started the 2020 season with a big win on the road in Gainesville, defeating Riverside Military Academy 10-2 on Tuesday, Feb. 25.

The Indians were supposed to host Riverside on Monday, Feb. 24, but were forced to reschedule their home opener due to inclement weather, which is why they faced off against the Eagles Tuesday in Gainesville instead of in Towns County.

During the game, the Eagles jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the second inning, scoring their only runs in the game. The Indians answered right back with a score to cut Riverside's lead to one in the third.

Both teams went scoreless through the next three innings before the Indians mounted a 9-0 run — one score in the seventh inning and eight more in the eighth — to close the game, defeating Riverside Military Academy 10-2 for their season opener.

Sophomore Collin Crowder started on the mound for the Indians and pitched the first two innings, giving up three hits and two runs while retiring three batters.

Cabe Poston, also a sophomore, took to the mound for the third inning, pitching through four innings while only giving up one hit and striking out five batters.

Junior Aidan Berrong was called to the mound in the seventh inning, as the Indians were in a tie ballgame with the Eagles. Berrong closed the game, pitching two hitless in-

nings and helping the Indians win their season opener that Tuesday.

Next up, the Indians traveled to Savannah to play three games starting Thursday, Feb. 27.

On the way to Savannah, the Indians and Head Baseball Coach Shannon Floyd took the time to visit the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, Georgia.

"During the visit, our team learned about the Mighty Eighth and the great sacrifices made by all Americans in the defense of our freedom during World War II," the Towns County Schools Facebook page said.

The first of the team's three games in South Georgia was against Windsor Forest Knights, whom the Indians defeated 15-6 on Thursday.

They were down 5-2 in the bottom of the second, but at the top of the third, the Indians scored three runs of their own to tie the game at five apiece.

From there, Towns County never looked back, as they continued to put runs on the board, adding two runs in the fourth inning while holding the Knights to just one run that same inning, and putting up eight more runs in the fifth.

The game was ultimately called after only five innings due to the mercy rule, where one team is declared a winner if it's ahead by a certain number of runs.

Senior Jacob Kinsey started on the mound Thursday against the Knights, followed by Berrong, then sophomore Brack Burrell.

Towns County then went up against the Bryan County Redskins for the first game of

a Saturday doubleheader on Feb. 29.

Freshman Caleb Berrong started on the mound for the Indians against the Redskins. Berrong pitched through four innings, giving up eight hits and eight runs while striking out two batters.

Kinsey was called to the mound to start the sixth inning, and while Kinsey held Bryan County scoreless to close the game, the Indians were unable to generate enough offense to mount a comeback.

After dropping the first game of the doubleheader, however, the Indians bounced right back with a convincing 12-6 win over the Liberty County Panthers.

They kicked things off with a 4-0 lead in the top of the first inning, tacking on two more runs in the second and two more runs in the third to give Towns County a commanding 8-2 lead heading into the fifth inning.

The Indians added two more runs in the sixth and two more in the seventh to defeat the Panthers 12-6 in what served as a sweet victory to officially mark the end of their trip to Savannah.

Crowder started on the mound for the Indians in their second game on Saturday. He pitched into the sixth inning, only giving up three hits and four runs through five innings, while retiring six batters.

Poston was called to the mound to close the match, and he allowed two hits and two runs and struck out one batter in just over one inning pitched.

The Indians go on the road again this week to take on Tallulah Falls Wednesday, March 4, at 4:30 p.m.

NASCAR 2020

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Bowman Gets Second Cup Win

FONTANA, CA - Alex Bowman picked up his second career NASCAR Cup Series victory this past Sunday, as he outraced the Busch Brothers.

Bowman led five times for 110 laps of the 200 lap race. He was near the front for most of the race. He relinquished the lead briefly when he made his last pit stop under green, but regained it on lap 170 and finished the race by nearly 9-seconds ahead of Kyle Busch.

Bowman, the 26-year-old Arizonan, grew up racing almost weekly in nearby Pomona.

"I grew up racing just 20 minutes from here, so this is really a special day," said Bowman. "We've been so good to start this season. We didn't win the other races, but but we've had a nearly perfect team. We've got to go win a bunch more, but man, it feels good to have one this early."

Kyle Busch moved into second-place after Ryan Blaney had to pit with three laps to go.

"Yeah, we have a lot of work to do," Kyle Busch said. "Guys did a great job here, though, just trying to work on it and trying to make everything that we could out of it all day long, all weekend long. The car wasn't a winning car, but thankfully we got a good finish out of here — we tried to get some points."

"We've unloaded the last two weeks — I don't think we've had to make a change in the race car from how it came off the truck. That makes my job a heck of a lot easier. I'm just so proud of this team. We put a lot of effort into this new car, and it's obviously worked out really well."

Kurt Busch was third, while Chase Elliott finished fourth.

Elliott's team was off this week. He did not win either stage of the race, or lead any laps.

Brad Keselowski was fifth, Denny Hamlin was sixth and Jimmie Johnson, who started on the outside pole, led 3 times for 10 laps finished seventh.

"Our team is going in the right direction," Johnson said. "I've known in my heart what I'm capable of and what our team is. ... We just faded too much at the end. I thought I was going to blow a tire, but we salvaged a top-10 out of it. It's a huge thing for us out here in California. There's been great vibes the whole weekend."

Johnson's winless streak now stands at 98, the worst of his career.

Aric Almirola, Kevin Harvick, and Erik Jones were the remaining top-10 finishers.

Ryan Blaney won Stage 2 and led 54 laps. He was running second when a right rear tire went flat and he had to pit with three laps to go.

"Frustrating, that's all I can say," said Blaney. "We run good and almost every week something pops up to either cost us a win or a good finish."

Polesitter, Clint Bowyer finished one lap down in 23rd.

Top-10 leaders after 3 of 36: 1. Blaney-122, 2. Logano-111, 3. Bowman-110, 4. Harvick-110, 5. Johnson-106, 6. Elliott-105, 7.



Bowman Gets Second Cup Win

Hamlin-94, 8. DiBenedetto-87, 9. Larson-86, 10. Almirola-82.

HARRISON BURTON GETS FIRST XFINITY WIN

Harrison Burton, son of former NASCAR racer, Jeff Burton held off teammate Riley Herbst for his first career Xfinity Series victory Saturday at Fontana.

"To get a win feels so good, especially after we struggled a little bit last year," Burton said. "Once we moved up to the top at the end, it was going to be hard for him to pass us. Just trying to be smart and not put it in the wall leading."

Austin Cindric was third, followed by Ryan Sieg, Justin Haley, Anthony Alfredo, Daniel Hemric, Ross Chastain, Jeremy Clements, and Josh Williams.

Top-10 leaders after 3 of 33: 1. H. Burton-136, 2. Briscoe-126, 3. Cindric-118, 4. Sieg-112, 5. Haley-105, 6. B. Jones-103, 7. Chastain-100, 8. Annett-99, 9. Gragson-98, 10. Allgaier-98.

Other Racing News: Matt DiBenedetto is having his best-ever start of a season. It's clearly still too early to judge his entire season. But his results thus far give some reason for optimism. With finishes of 19th at Daytona, a second at Las Vegas, he is showing the stuff which real racers are made of.

He moved to the Cup Series in 2015, but it was with several under-funded organizations including BK Racing, Go Fas Racing and then Leavine Family Racing in 2019. Each organization unfolded with more disappointments and a few moments of glory, leaving DiBenedetto looking for more.

Over the years, DiBenedetto has formed a trend of closing one door for another to open. And so it was with announcing his intention to leave Leavine Family Racing at the end of the 2019 season. And just like that, the newest door opened for DiBenedetto. With Paul Menard retiring, he was leaving the No. 21 seat open at Wood Brothers Racing.

DiBenedetto joined Wood Brothers Racing for the 2020 season. And from the start, it seems a perfect match for both sides. His second-place finish at Las Vegas will make the rest of the season fun to watch.

While Gibbs Racing, Penske

Racing and a few of NASCAR's other teams are doing well, Hendrick Motorsports has fallen on leaner times. Bowman's win this past Sunday was something they needed.

The four-car organization was the top Cup Series team for years. From 2010-14, they claimed 43 victories. There were four straight championships from 1995-98; another in '01; five straight from 2006-10; and two others in '13 and '16. But that changed after the 2016 season. Over the last five seasons, 2015-19, the team reached victory lane just 25 times. In 2018, there were just three wins.

Jimmie Johnson's 2016 season was the last really good one. Today, Hendrick Motorsports is the one doing the chasing, digging deep and searching for week-to-week consistency.

"It's one of those things," said Rick Hendrick. "You accept it, but you don't like it. It's hard, and it's going to be hard. But I feel good about where we are, and I'm excited about the future. I hate to see Jimmie hang it up, because of just his contribution to the sport and to our company, and the kind of guy he is. But we're determined to give him every opportunity to go out the way a champion should."

Racing Joke: During lunch break at the race car shop, Kevin and one of the mechanics take a little walk along a side street. A man is holding a sign that reads: "Talking dog for sale, \$10."

Kevin couldn't believe his ears, when the dog said, "Please buy me. I'm a great dog. I played professional football. I was even nominated most valuable player."

"That dog really does talk," Kevin gasped. "Why in the world do you want to sell him for just ten dollars?"

"He never played professional football," said the dog's owner. "And I can't stand a liar."

Weekend Racing: NASCAR racing continues its westward swing. This weekend the Cup and Xfinity teams will be at the one-mile Phoenix Raceway.

Sat, Mar. 7; Xfinity Series race 4 of 33; Starting time: 4 PM ET; TV: Foxsports 1.

Sun, Mar. 8; Cup Series race 4 of 36; Starting time: 3:30 PM ET; TV: Fox.

Racing Trivia Question: Who won the 1970 NASCAR Cup Series Championship?

Last Week's Question: Who was the first woman to qualify for the Daytona 500? Answer: It was Janet Guthrie in 1977. She finished 12th after losing an engine with 12 laps to go. I talked with her in 1999, and she told me NASCAR and their entire racing system, including drivers, had not accepted women when she entered the sport in the 1970s.

"The first time I went to Daytona they didn't want to let me into the pits," she said. "I continued to ask why, and they said it was because dresses were not allowed. I kept insisting, and finally, Jim Hunter, who was the P/R person sat down at a desk. He took his pants off, gave them to me, and I was allowed to go into the pit area wearing Jim's pants."

Gerald Hodges is a syndicated NASCAR writer and author. His books may be viewed and ordered online at Amazon.com. You may contact him by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com.



Towns County's baseball players visited the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum during their trip.

Annual Duncan Dash 5K Run/Walk to benefit Haven Project of Georgia

The 4th Annual Duncan Dash 5K run/walk and fun run will be held March 21st at 8:30 AM at Meeks Park in Blairsville. This year, it will benefit a local non-profit, Haven Project of Georgia.

The race will start and end at Pavilion #3 and the gazebo near the softball fields and playground and will include a beautiful route through Meeks Park and the dog park.

To register in advance, go to www.active.com and look for 4th Annual Duncan Dash or email duncandash5k@gmail.com for a paper registration form. Participants with disabilities can register for free by emailing havenprojectofga@gmail.com. Race t-shirts are guaranteed to those who register by March 7th and will be given

first-come, first-serve to later registrants, including those who sign up the day of the race, as long as supplies last.

Awards will be given for the overall male and female winners, overall masters male and female winners, and three deep in ten-year age groups from 10 and under to 70 and over. The team or group showing the most spirit will also be recognized.

All proceeds from the race will benefit Haven Project of Georgia, a non-profit organization that serves individuals with disabilities and their families in north Georgia and western North Carolina by offering free education, advocacy, and respite programs. Haven is neighbors helping neighbors get access to the programs and services they need to live their best lives.