

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Indians fourth, Lady Indians fifth at 30th Battle of the States

Tucker Engert and Ava Thompson earn All-Tournament nod

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
Towns County Herald

The Towns County Indians finished the Battle of the States Christmas Tournament with a fourth-place finish following a loss to Rabun County in the Monday, Dec. 30th third-place game.

Earlier, the Lady Indians took the season's rubber match vs. Hayesville, North Carolina after the rivals split the previous two December meetings.

Lady Indians 43, Hayesville, NC 40 - All-Tournament selection Ava Thompson's 15 points on five 3-pointers led Towns County to its second win of the year over the Jackets in the Battle of the States finale.

During the first period, Thompson was responsible for three of her team's five treys, helping the Lady Indians race ahead 21-7, before eventually holding off a late Hayesville push.

A Jackets' 7-0 run to close the first narrowed the gap to 21-14, but Kaleigh Beaver and Scotlyn Fain accounted for 7 of their team's 9 second-quarter points as Towns County built a 30-19 halftime advantage.

Thompson's triple expanded the margin to 33-19 early in the third, but Hayesville answered with a 5-0 spurt



Ava Thompson and Tucker Engert were named to the All-Tournament before two Ansleigh Hardin free throws bumped the lead back to double digits at the 2:56 mark of the quarter.

The Jackets countered with two free throws in the final seconds to climb within 35-27 entering the fourth, but two free throws by Fain to start the final frame maintained a 10-point cushion.

Hayesville fired back with 10 straight points, tying

the game at 37-37 with 3:40 remaining. But on the ensuing Lady Indians possession, Thompson connected from downtown to put her team back in front.

Hayesville had a chance to tie it up, but missed an open 3 with 40 seconds to play, however, Towns turned it over with 27 seconds left, allowing the Jackets to move within two via a free throw 10 seconds later.



Team at the 30th Battle of the States. Photos by Lowell Nicholson

With her team up 40-38, Natalie Barnes knocked down two free throws with 16 seconds left, and then she stretched the lead 43-38, splitting two at the line with 9 seconds left.

Hayesville scored on a putback as time expired, bringing the final tally to 43-40.

Hardin finished with 9 points; Fain had 7 points; Beaver and Barnes scored 6

points each.

Hayesville's Mallory Peck scored a game-high 20.

Indians 64, No. 6 Rabun County 105 - The Wildcats outscored Towns County 30-11 in the second quarter to break things open 51-27 at the break.

Two early baskets by Cruz Kitchens had Towns County out front 6-2, but Rabun answered with a 10-0 run before a Kitchens trey had

the Indians back within three at 12-9.

Tucker Engert's drive kept his team in striking distance at 15-11, and two Jonas Rouse free throws, followed by a Mason Pierson trey, narrowed the margin to 19-16 with 28 seconds left in the first.

However, Rabun County extended its 21-16 lead with a 14-2 run to start the second. Dustin Barrett finally slowed the bleeding with 4:25 before half, but the Wildcats responded by rattling off seven straight to take a 42-20 lead.

Engert and Pierson added buckets to keep Towns County within 21, but that's as close as they would get the rest of the night.

Barrett finished with 14 points, six rebounds and two steals. Rouse had 12 points, seven boards and two assists.

Kitchens ended his night with 10 points, two boards and a block. Engert went for 10 points, five rebounds and two assists.

Pierson had 9 points, two assists and a steal. John Durham added 7 points, five rebounds and a block. Baylor Rogers had 2 points and a rebound.

Up next: The Indians and Lady Indians travel to Washington-Wilkes on Friday, Jan. 10. Towns County hosts Taliaferro County on Saturday, Jan. 11



Senior and four-year starter Kaleigh Beaver takes the floor for the final time in a Battle of the States tournament game. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Dustin Barrett led Towns County with 14 points in last week's Battle of the States finale vs. Rabun County. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Alex Henderson playing football in December

By Shelly Knight
Staff Writer
Towns County Herald

On Thursday, Dec. 19 Towns County senior Alex Henderson competed with other seniors in a unique competition. The event was held at Fannin County High School and was sponsored by The Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA).

Georgia and Tennessee faced off. Jason Roquemore was selected as head coach for Georgia. The Georgia team included seniors from Fannin, Gilmore, Pickens, Towns and Union Counties. Kids who once competed against one another on the field suddenly found themselves working together on the same team.

"I selected Alex Henderson to play because he has been an instrumental part of changing the culture and holding our standard in our football program, school, and community. His leadership and commitment to excellence will leave an everlasting impact not only on me, but he guys he was able to



Alex Henderson in action during the FCA game.

influence in our locker room," said Roquemore.

Matt Queen and Jerry Helton of FCA hosted the event. "These are seniors from five counties playing in an all-star game. It's their last chance to play. They are just good kids. They competed against each other all season long and now they are coming together as a team. Georgia teams are play-

ing together. Tennessee teams are playing together. It's just the neatest thing to see.

"Watching the teams come together and gel - a lot of that depends on the coaches. We've got coaches from each of the schools and referees from Georgia and Tennessee and everyone volunteers their time.

There are modified rules, so kids don't get hurt. Some of

these kids already have scholarship offers. It's a chance to give these great athletes one last chance to play. And we get the opportunity to share the gospel with them in a pre-game meal. Then come back and have a lot of fun," said Helton.

"As far as building and coaching the team this week, it has been a collective effort," said Roquemore. "We have some great coaches in this area that were willing to come on staff for this game. Coaches that understand that it is the 'relationship' piece that matters the most. When you take that approach, the football side of things becomes easy.

"Even though we came up a little short at the end, I though the kids had a great week and I really appreciate Matt Queen giving me the opportunity to lead these young men this week. It's been a great experience," said Roquemore.

While the final score showed 14-6, there really is no measurement for the motivating sight of young men becoming a team.

Wrestling: Indians battle to ninth place finish at Stephens

By Shelly Knight
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Towns County Herald

Towns County wrestling traveled to Stephens County during the week of December 15th, to compete in the Arrowhead Invationals.

Towns finished ninth out of 16 teams with senior Nick Vargas and Jack Stowers leading the way. Vargas went 4-1 on the day to finish 3rd in a very deep and tough 132-lb weight class.

Stowers went 2-1 to finish as runner up in a very top heavy and tough 165-lb weight class. Towns also picked up wins and team points from Bear Chauncy, Will Walls and Cabe Calhoun.

"Madilyn Walls got an opportunity to wrestle this weekend on the girls' side of the tournament," head coach Clay Livingston said. "We would like to find more tournaments that our girls and boys are invited to participate in at the same

site and time but it has proved to be difficult so far. Madilyn wrestled some quality competition and competed well."

We continue to work and try to improve, and maybe the most difficult thing to do this time of the year, which is to stay healthy," Livingston added.

The team was scheduled to take on Murphy in December but was rescheduled to Jan. 7.

"We did pretty well at Lumpkin County on the 21st," said Coach Livingston. "It was a varsity/JV tournament, so I was able to enter our freshmen into the JV portion of the meet. We had multiple placers in that event. While we expected to attend the Area Duals on January 11th, it is a team tournament used as a qualifier for state duals. We do not have enough weight classes filled out to compete for team trophies."

The team will take on Seneca (away) but Senior Night versus Rabun Gap/Franklin will be on January 21st. Come out and cheer the team on.