Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Lady Indians third at Class A Public Cross Country Championships

Towns County men finish 11th at State Championships; place two runners in top 35

By Todd Forrest Sports Editor sports@nganews.com

Carrollton - Once again, Towns County Head Coach Jeannie Ledford and her Lady Indians Cross Country squad were locked in a battle at the Class A Public State Championships.

Each position lost or gained was critical. Every point mattered; from first place through

each runner that crossed the finish line, her confidence received a boost when Towns County's top five all crossed the finish line ahead of anyone else. Telfair County had two

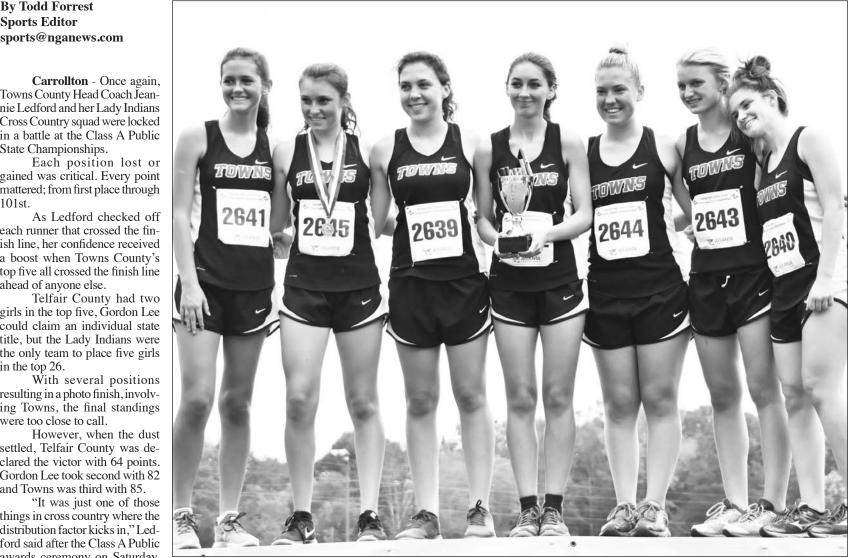
could claim an individual state title, but the Lady Indians were the only team to place five girls With several positions resulting in a photo finish, involv-

were too close to call. However, when the dust settled, Telfair County was declared the victor with 64 points. Gordon Lee took second with 82 and Towns was third with 85.

"It was just one of those things in cross country where the distribution factor kicks in," Ledford said after the Class A Public awards ceremony on Saturday. "We had our five (runners) in. Generally, if you get your five in you win. The distribution factor has always smiled in our favor over the years in tiebreakers and these exact situations. This year our favor ran out."

No one else was even in the same neighborhood as the top three. Fourth place Atlanta Classical Academy was 49 points behind Towns County. Commerce came in fifth, 40 points back of ACA with 174 points.

While it wasn't the preferred ending to Ledford's coaching career, her Lady Indians confronted adversity head-on this season and emerged on the medal stand in Carrollton, where they came within an eyelash of



The Towns County Lady Indians on the medal stand with their third place trophy. Photos by Todd Forrest

an unprecedented sixth straight

'We started the season battling injuries and we only had four girls," Ledford said. "So we went from barely even having enough for a team to fighting back to literally being neck and neck (for a state title).

Leading the way for Towns County was Hannah Whitehead, who crossed the finish line seventh at 23:15. Not far behind was 15th place Taralee Arrowood at 24:36 and 16th place Taylor Cornett, who came on strong late in the race to clock in at 24:47.78, forcing a tie at the with Hawkinsville's Sarah Andrews Rucker.

Placing 23rd was Lydia

Moss, who passed ACA's Clara Mastrion at the finish line with a time of 25:26.26. To put it into perspective the significance of each point, Moss edged Mastrion, who clocked in at 25:26.78, by a half-second to steal a point for Towns County - while also taking a point from the competition. The end result: a 2-point swing.

Rounding out the top five was Jasmine Miranda in 27th place with a time of 25:50, two seconds ahead of Gordon Lee's Riley Cash.

The remaining members of the Lady Indians squad were Hayley Stowers in 50th and Sara

Beth Hobbs in 97th place. Gordon Lee's Gracie and Xavier Hogsed in 106th.

O'Neal took home first overall with a time of 20:23 - two minutes better than second place Shayla Cook of Telfair County.

As for Whitehead, she

ahead of ninth place. In the boys race, Kayne Hoffman and Blythe Smith placed 33rd and 34th, respectively, with

finished five seconds back of

seventh place and seven seconds

times of 20:50 and 20:52. Caleb Ledford came in 55th with a time of 21:50; Jordan Lovelace placed 61st at 22:10 and

Liam King rounded out the Indians' top five in 75th at 22:40. Other Towns County competitors were Ryan Tyler in 88th

Towns was ninth place Terrell County and 39 points in front was eighth place Schley County. While the Indians were

he will be missed, but the boys

had two freshmen that really

stepped up this year and made a

difference," Ledford said. "They

have a bright future ahead for

the coach that decides to take

Towns was three points shy of

a top 10 finish, as Claxton held

off the Indians with 240 points.

Twenty-three points ahead of

In the team standings,

them on.'

in the hunt for a top eight placement, they put some distance

Kaine Hoffman



Blythe Smith

"Kaine Hoffman was the between themselves and the leader of both our teams and teams chasing them.

> In 12th was Telfair County 38 points back. Meanwhile. Greene County placed 13th - 60 points behind Towns County.

> "The reason I returned for one more year was for these 11 seniors and they gave every single thing they had today, Ledford said. "Their performance was beautiful. Absolutely

> "You won't find a better group of kids than these two Towns County cross country teams. We are so elated to represent our town, our community, and our school.'

Indians make state playoffs, celebrate 42-21 victory against Providence

By Shawn Jarrard Towns County Herald Staff Writer

Football Head Coach John Cornett and the Towns County Indians set a high bar for themselves at the beginning of the season: to make the state playoffs for the first time in school history.

And as the final seconds of the game ran down in Providence Christian Academy's Vaught Stadium on Friday, Nov. 3, word had begun to spread that the Boys in Blue were heading to the GHSA Class A Public State Championship Playoffs.

The Indians defeated Providence 42-21, bringing their official season record to 5-5, the best Towns County football season in almost a decade, and the best ever in region play.

But they needed more than just a win against Providence to secure a spot in the playoffs.

Despite their stunning 56-13 defeat of Lakeview Academy on Oct. 27, the Indians moved from 23rd to 25th in the GHSA Class A Public Power Ratings, and only the Top 24 teams in the state go to the playoffs.

So, heading into the final game of the season against Providence, they needed both a win against Providence and at least one or two other teams ahead of them in the rankings to lose.

And that's what became clear on the sidelines at the very end of their winning game against Providence, that all the cards had fallen in the Indians' favor - right there at the end of one of the best seasons they'd ever had, The Tribe learned they were heading to the playoffs.

Postseason play means that the team's 11 seniors will get at least one more game together as Towns County Indians, and Coach Cornett is excited to be able to afford them that oppor-

tunity.
"This is what we set out to do this year, and we knew we could do it," said Coach Cornett, who enjoyed a celebratory ice bucket from players after Friday's win. "These seniors are unbelievable, to have the history we do, and for them to believe that we'd win it and be in the playoffs."

The team worked hard this season to make their goal a reality, setting off on a journey that had its ups and downs, but that ended with the Indians playing as a well-



Coach Cornett gets an unexpected ice cold shower following Friday's win. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

could pull off one, maybe two other games," said Cornett, lookdidn't happen, but I really felt like if we got five, we'd make the playoffs.

them their spot in the playoffs, upcoming opponents are about to have their hands full.

"If I was another coach, I

'We really believed we into the playoffs," said Cornett. "I think we're a dangerous team right now. We've got history on ing back on the season. "And it our side and the kids believe in what we're doing - we're not

Continued Cornett, ad-The Indians' fierce deter- dressing the community: "Just mination to never back down, come support us this week. Our even in the face of adversity, won kids deserve it, they've worked hard all year. They set a goal and and Coach Cornett said that their they accomplished it. Now, we want everybody to buy in to what we're doing.'

Senior Luke Woody, would not want to play us coming known for his ability to rally

fans from the sidelines, said after Friday's game that the season had taken on a surreal quality, especially after everyone learned that the Indians had made the

"What more could you ask for?" said Woody. "It's almost euphoric. I've played ball since I was a freshman, worked my tail off, and it's just nice to see the fruits of that labor, finally.

"I just want to say thank you to the community for coming out and supporting us in all our

traveling with us. I hope y'all said it was a parent's dream to come out and support us in our first ever playoff appearance."

Cole Ledford is another senior who will get to play at least kids that's played all these years one more game alongside his fel- together make it to what they've low Indians, and Ledford's mom, wanted to since they were little," Penny, will have at least one more said Mrs. Ledford. " Penny, will have at least one more opportunity to take pictures of her son from the sidelines.

Rain or shine, Penny Ledford has photographed Cole and his teammates at sporting events for years, including all four years of high school football.

She's proud of all the Indians, many of whom she watched grow up alongside Cole, and she see her son perform at such a high level. "It's good to see a group of

The Indians will face off against 10th ranked Pelham High School on Friday, Nov. 10, in

Mitchell County near the Georgia/Florida line. Game kickoff time was not available by press time, but

readers can monitor the GHSA webpage for more information and a finalized schedule.

TCHS Basketball gets underway

By Jerry Kendall **Towns County Herald Staff Writer**

The Towns County Lady Indians and Indians Varsity Basketball Season will be underway by the time most readers receive this newspaper as a result of a late change in the date of preseason scrimmage games at Robbinsville, North Carolina.

The games were originally scheduled for this Thursday, November 9, but were rescheduled for Tuesday, November 7, at

Regular season play is scheduled to begin next week with the Class A Lady Indians traveling to Class AAAA Stephens County home games, and coming and in Toccoa on Tuesday, November

14 at 6:00 pm with the Lady Indian JV's to play at 4:30. The Indians will not face Stephens County as two games against Stephens for the Lady Indians balance their schedule with that of the Indians who must face Region 8A opponent Riverside Military Academy

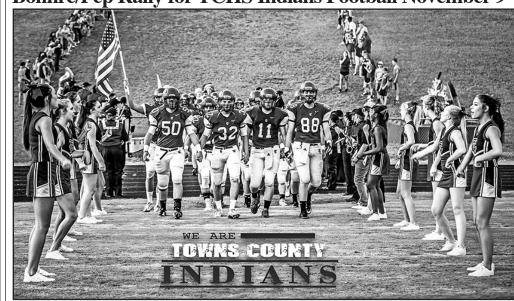
which has no girls team. The Indians are then scheduled get their regular season underway when they join the Lady Indians in competition at Class AA Rabun County on Saturday, November 18.

Fans planning to attend the Rabun County games should take note that these games will have much earlier than usual starting times with the JV games beginning at 1:00 pm and the varsity games beginning at 3:30.



Jason Seabolt 706-835-6978, or Tim Bohannon 706-781-4651

Bonfire/Pep Rally for TCHS Indians Football November 9



A community bonfire/celebration will be held for the TCHS Indians Football team this Thursday at 6 p.m. on the track at the Fire Pit. The Indians Football team has advanced to the play-offs for the first time ever. The community is invited to come out and show their support of these great young men! T(Nov8.H1)SH