

Towns County Sports

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Indians defeat Hebron and Athens Academy, suffer upset loss to GWA

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The Towns County Indians Varsity Basketball Team was in action three times last week in completing regular season play and took two hard fought wins at home over Hebron Christian Academy on Tuesday and at Athens Academy on Saturday while falling victim on their home court on Senior Night on Friday to an excellent performance by George Walton Academy and a difficult performance themselves.

The week's work left the Indians with an excellent 17-8 overall record, including 10-5 in Region 8A play. The seventeenth victory on Saturday at Athens Academy is noteworthy in representing the first time in forty two years for the Indians to reach seventeen victories in a season. There have been a number of outstanding Indian teams and individuals performing during this period of time but with such factors as difficult schedules including many games against larger public schools and all star private schools and injuries to key players preventing teams from reaching this total.

The Indians compiled an outstanding 24-4 record those forty two years ago during that 1975 Region Championship season with Eddie Rushton being the top player on the team but not appearing with his senior laden team in the region tournament due to having the mumps. It is interesting that Rushton was one of the officials in the Indians win over Hebron Christian last Tuesday.

The Region 8A Tournament is being held this week with the Indians, as the third place team behind Lakeview Academy and Tallullah Falls in Sub-Region 8A North, scheduled to face Prince Avenue Academy as the second place team behind Athens Christian from the south sub-region at 5:30 pm this Wednesday at Lakeview Academy in Gainesville. The winner of this game will face Lakeview Academy on the Lions' home court in the Region Semi-Finals on Friday with the winner of that game playing in the Region Championship Game on Saturday at Lakeview.

The Indians have already qualified for the Class A Public State Tournament with the opening round game to be held next week with the opponent, location, and game time to be determined following the completion of region tournaments around the state.

Indians 77, Hebron Christian Academy 71 – When considering the fact that the Hebron Christian Academy Lions of Dacula had fallen by just four points to Region 8A leader Lakeview Academy and by just five to the Indians on their home court and by just three to highly regarded Wesleyan on a neutral court, observers could certainly expect a real battle between the Indians and Lions last Tuesday in the Towns County Gym. When adding the unexpected reality of a first quarter injury to top flight Indian senior Major Moss reducing his potent scoring and rebounding ability for the remainder of the game and the presence of spectacular free throw shooting by the Lions, a victory by the Indians could certainly be considered in danger.

The Indians, including Moss, would rise to the occasion, however, and take a hard fought 77-71 victory, their fourth in a row, over the senior laden Lions. The first eight and a half minutes of the game would prove to be extremely competitive with eight ties but just one lead change during the period. The Indians either led or were tied with the Lions from the 7:39 mark to 3:47 of the first quarter while the Lions were ahead or held ties from that 3:47 mark to 5:03 of the second with the Indians then holding mostly small leads for most of the remaining minutes of the game.

Moss scored four of the Indians' first six points prior to this sustaining a painful out of socket shoulder injury at 3:24 of the first quarter and leaving the game for several minutes of playing time. In the meantime, junior Logan Cowart would provide five points in the first quarter with the Indians trailing by quarter's end 16-14.

After Cowart forced a 16-16 tie half a minute into the second quarter, the Lions used a 7-2 run for what would be their biggest lead of 23-18 by the 6:20 mark. Cowart would continue his potent first half after that by scor-



Towns County battles Hebron at home and Athens Academy on the road last week. Photos by Lowell Nicholson



ing eight straight points between the 5:59 and 4:08 marks for a 26-23 Indians lead they would hold by the previously mentioned mostly small leads for most of the remainder of the game. Junior Zach Davenport would score the Indians' final four points of the quarter as they held a 30-29 lead at intermission.

The first of two third quarter field goals by sophomore Will Travis would trigger an 8-2 Indians run at the start of the quarter for a 38-31 lead at the 5:11 mark but the Lions would respond with three treys and five for six free throw shooting between the 4:47 and 2:35 marks in taking their only two leads of the last half of 42-40 and 45-42.

A field goal by Travis at the two minutes mark got the Indians within 45-44 and senior Will De Vries, who had two earlier field goals in the quarter, struck for a three point play, a steal and coast to coast run for a deuce, and a trey for eight points the final minute and a half of the quarter. The trey would break the final tie of 49-49 with the Indians holding a 52-51 lead entering the fourth quarter.

After Cowart had scored ten points in the second quarter and De Vries twelve in the third who would have thought that an even bigger individual scoring quarter would be upcoming but that would be the case in the fourth as Travis would include a dunk in striking for twelve points, mostly under heavy defensive pressure, by the 3:04 mark in giving the Indians a 68-57 lead.

The Lions would not go quietly, however, as they used an 8-1 run for just a 69-65 deficit with just 1:31 left in the game. Travis' seventh basket of the quarter for fourteen points was followed by a free throw by Cowart, two by Davenport, and one by De Vries compared to three for four free throw shooting by the Lions in seemingly having safely ahead 75-68 by the 16.6 mark.

But the Lions tossed in a trey with eleven seconds left reducing the Indian lead to 75-71 with the Indians under pressure to get the ball inbounds after a timeout. All was well as they did more than get the ball inbounds with Moss finding Cowart open for a dunk at six seconds in placing an exclamation point on a solid 77-71 Indians victory. De Vries added six points in the fourth quarter as he and Travis each scored eighteen last half points. It must have been rewarding for Travis as a sophomore to receive two assists each from upper classmen Davenport, De Vries, and Moss during the fourth quarter.

De Vries led the Indians in scoring for the game with 23 points and was followed by Cowart with 20, Travis with 18, Davenport with 10, and Moss with 6. Moss, while having his scoring and rebounding capabilities reduced due to the injury, led in assists with 9 and was followed by Davenport with 5 and De Vries with 3. Cowart and Moss tied for the lead in rebounds with 9 each and were followed by De Vries with 8, Davenport and Travis with 2 each, and sophomore Trent Bradshaw with 1.

The Lions, who feature six seniors on their roster, were led in scoring by seniors Wesley Warbington with 22 points and John Stewart with 18 and junior Troy Allen with 9. The Lions sank an incredible twenty four free throws in twenty seven attempts for the game compared to a quite good fourteen for twenty three for the Indians. The Indians sank thirty one field goals as compared to twenty one for the Lions but the Lions did have the advantage of five treys compared to just one by the Indians.

In a continuing case of misfortune, top flight Indians senior Adam Barrett learned from his medical providers on Monday prior to this game that he would not be able to return as hoped for the final games of the season with at least three weeks added to his recovery time but hope present for his being released in time for the upcoming baseball season.

George Walton Academy 69, Indians 51 – Last Friday's home game for the Indians against George Walton Academy provides a prime example of a game not going as might have been expected if based upon available team records and scores of their games. The Indians entered the game with a 16-7 record, including 9-4 in Region 8A, compared to 9-13 overall and 5-8 in region play for George



Baseball fundraiser
The 2017 Towns County Varsity Baseball team will be at Ingles on Saturday, February 11, 2017 from 9 AM until 5 PM. Please come out and help support our team. Let the Indians bag you up! Any and all donations are greatly appreciated! Thank you!
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Walton. Further, the Indians had lost only one regular season game to a team from Sub-Region 8A South up to this point in the last two seasons.

That one loss might have provided a clue as to what might happen in this game on senior night for the Indians as they fell early last season by a 59-30 score at Athens Christian after all appearances of a good chance to end a long losing streak to the Eagles. The Indians had turned the tables on the visiting Eagles a week earlier in this season when they entered the game as the first place team from Sub-Region 8A South with a 16-3 record and most likely an expectation of a victory but with the Indians pretty much dominating from start to finish in a 59-38 victory.

So it's not as shocking as might be expected for this report to inform readers that the Bulldogs of George Walton pretty much took control of the game the last half of the first quarter and continued on their way to a decisive 69-51 victory with not much going well for the Indians on this evening. It's not really unusual for a team to have difficulty during the emotion of a Senior Night with a most striking example available on a quick look down memory lane.

The 2009 Senior Night was spoiled for the Lady Indians who were dominated from start to finish and took it on the chin in a 70-37 loss to Social Circle after taking a 57-55 win at Social Circle a few weeks earlier. This was not the end of the story, however, as the Lady Indians just

eight nights later would travel back to Social Circle and play a nearly flawless game in defeating the Lady Redskins 56-46 in winning their first region championship in thirty two years and only the second in history although this was the first of four such championships achieved over a period of five years.

The Indians led for most of the first five minutes of the game against George Walton as early deuces by Zach Davenport and Logan Cowart got them a 4-0 lead and a three point play by Cowart had them ahead 7-4 and a trey by Davenport had them leading by a 10-8 score by the 3:28 mark. But turnovers proved to be costly for the Indians as two Bulldog treys, at the 3:07 and 2:35 marks, got them off and running on a 16-1 run for a 24-11 lead after one quarter and they made it 26-11 on a field goal just six seconds into the second quarter.

It appeared that the Indians might be getting back into the game after that on two free throws by Davenport and two field goals by Cowart for a 6-0 run getting them to within single digits at 26-17 at the 5:28 mark. Cowart then continued his good work as two free throws matched a Bulldog deuce and a field goal almost matched a trey for just a 31-21 Indian deficit at 3:27, giving him eight points in the quarter and fourteen for the half with Davenport contributing the other seven first half Indian points.

But the Bulldogs would end the quarter with a deuce and a trey for a 36-21 lead at intermission and lead 48-31 after three quarters on the way to the 69-51 victory. Leading individual Indian point totals by quarter for the last half included eight in the third and four in the fourth by Major Moss, five in the fourth by Will De Vries, and four each in the fourth by junior Bradley Benson and Davenport.

The Indians were led in scoring for the game by Cowart with 16 points and he was followed by Moss with 13, Davenport with 11, De Vries with 5, Benson with 4, and Trent Bradshaw with 3. Moss led in assists with 5 and was followed by Davenport with 4 and the quartet of Benson, De Vries, junior Cole Ledford, and senior Colton Shook with 1 each. Moss also led in rebounds with 11 as Davenport added 5, Cowart 4, and De Vries 2. Will Travis missed this game due to illness and played only briefly against Athens Academy on Saturday.

The Bulldogs were led in scoring by sophomore Brellan Holston with 17 points, senior Cason Brown with 14, junior Torey Zanders with 14, and senior Brennan Carter with 12.

Indians 56, Athens Academy 53 – It was surely quite a bit of a difficulty for the Indians to have an early trip on Saturday following the disappointment of the loss to George Walton on Friday to face the Athens Academy Spartans but this was a makeup game necessitated by a weather related postponement from January 7.

The first half of this game proved to be a real battle with the Indians leading for most of the first quarter, including by a 12-11 margin at quarter's end, and the Spartans ahead for nearly half of the second but the Indians pushing out to the biggest first half lead for either team of 21-17 at intermission. Zach Davenport provided nine of the twelve first quarter points for the Indians and the final four of the second as a 7-0 Indian run propelled them from a 17-14 deficit to the 21-17 lead with a deuce by Davenport at the 1:21 mark getting them a lead they would not relinquish although have challenged until the final buzzer.

An early third quarter Logan Cowart basket got the Indians a 23-17 lead and they followed a trey and a deuce by the Spartans for a 23-22 score with a 19-12 run, highlighted by twelve points by De Vries, four by Davenport, and a trey by Colton Shook, for a 42-34 lead at the twenty four seconds mark which became a 42-36 lead entering the fourth quarter.

The Indians continued their good work at the start of the fourth quarter with two baskets by Cowart and two by Davenport sandwiched around a pair by the Spartans for the Indians' biggest lead of 50-40 with four and a half minutes remaining. The Spartans wouldn't go away, however, as they sandwiched two free throws and a deuce before and a trey and deuce following a Davenport basket for a 9-2 run and just a 52-49 deficit at 1:44.

A put back basket by Cowart at 1:10 got the Indians a 54-49 lead but the Spartans rolled a field goal into the basket at forty one seconds and then sank two free throws at 19.4 seconds to edge to within 54-53. Davenport responded with two crucial free throws at 14.1 seconds and the Indians escaped with a hard earned 56-53 victory when the Spartans missed two trey attempts for a tie at five seconds and at the buzzer with the first attempt dipping into and out of the basket. Davenport and Cowart combined for the Indians' fourteen fourth quarter points with eight and six respectively.

Davenport took the scoring lead for the game with 25 points and was followed by De Vries with 14, Cowart with 9, Major Moss with 5, and Shook with 4 and Cowart and De Vries with 2 each. Moss again led in rebounds with 13 and was followed by Cowart with 7, Davenport with 6, De Vries and Shook with 2 each, and Bradley Benson with 1. The Spartans were led in scoring by sophomore Jack Murrah with 17 points and freshman Lenneth Whitehead with 12.

For the Towns County Lady Indians results, you may visit: nganews.blogspot.com

Towns wrestling qualifies three for State



Kaine Hoffman placed fourth at 126 lbs, Blaine Rogers was second at 145 lbs, and Nichols Shook placed third at 170 lbs. All three are headed to Macon for State.