

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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## State bound: Baldwin and Mercer

By Joe Collins  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

**Mt. Vernon** - Congratulations go out to junior Vonya Baldwin and freshman Carson Mercer in their great performance at Mt. Vernon High School this weekend.

Baldwin finished third in the 132-pound class and Mercer came in fourth in the 113-pound class to qualify for an opportunity to wrestle at the State level this coming weekend in Macon.

The upcoming schedule can be located at the Georgia High School Association Web site www.ghsa.net.

Both Baldwin and Mercer have worked very hard this year and it has shown in the way they have finished in both the Dual format and Individually.

"I am very proud of these two. They have improved dramatically this year and it showed last weekend at the sectionals,"



Carson Mercer

said TCHS Head Wrestling Coach Jeff Stowers.

It is a great honor to qualify for a state appearance and it just goes to show everyone that the athletes from TCHS are becoming better and more confident in their performances.

The girl's Cross Country team brought home a state title and the high school as a whole is producing some amazing results



Vonya Baldwin

through the individual pride that is associated with success.

The coaches are fantastic and it lets other schools know to take notice when the TCHS athletes take the stage.

Way to go TCHS wrestlers Vonya Baldwin and Carson Mercer.

Your school and your community congratulate you.

## Lady Indians ...continued from Page 6

follow. This time a long deuce by Albach, a 10-footer by Cochran, and Blythe's fifth basket of the half gave the Lady Indians a 6-1 run and a 21-18 which became 21-20 by intermission. The third quarter became a real difficulty for the Lady Indians as the Lady Storm outscored them 10-3 for a 31-25 lead entering the fourth quarter.

The Lady Storm wrapped two baskets around a Cochran putback basket for their biggest leads of 33-25 and 35-27 by the 6:27 mark and it was crunch time for the Lady Indians. They rose to the occasion with a 7-0 run between the 4:50 and 2:56 marks on four straight free throws by Kellsie Cowart and a steal and coast to coast run ending in a 3-point play by Patton for just a 35-34 Lady Indian deficit.

The Lady Storm had managed just four points since the 3:30 mark of the third quarter but still had the lead and sank a field goal at 2:24 of the fourth for a 37-34 advantage. A long deuce by Cochran from just inside the 3-point line at

2:06 and a Cowart free throw at 1:39 got the Lady Indians a 37-37 tie which would still be the score at the end of the fourth quarter.

The Lady Indians suffered a blow when the vital services of point guard Cochran were lost on fouls for the first time this season when she was charged with her fourth at the 30.6 seconds mark and her fifth at 27.0 seconds. The Lady Storm missed a chance for the lead by missing a 1-and-1 free throw attempt on the second foul as did the Lady Indians at 3.3 seconds with a four minute overtime following.

A field goal by Blythe got the Lady Indians a 39-37 lead at 2:58 they would not relinquish as they used 4-for-6 free throw shooting in protecting the lead and escaping with a heart stopping 43-41 victory. Two free throws by Cowart at 2:17 for a 41-37 Towns lead were matched by a drive for two by Providence at 1:53 with Cowart sinking a third charity toss at 1:34 for a 42-39 Lady Indian lead.

The Lady Storm still

wasn't through creating drama, however, as two free throws at 30.9 seconds had them within 42-41.

Albach then sank a vital free throw at 8.7 seconds for a two point Towns advantage which held up for the win but not without last second anxiety. A Lady Storm player drove the baseline and sank a reverse lay up near the 1-second mark for what would have been a tie but she stepped on the end line on the drive and the Lady Indians only had to get the ball inbounds to end the game with the dramatic 43-41 overtime victory.

Post players Blythe and Cowart led the Lady Indians in scoring with 12 and 11 points respectively and were followed by Cochran with 8 and Albach and Patton with 6 each.

Cochran led in assists with 5 with other leaders being Albach and Bailey Sutton with 2 each. Leaders in steals were Cochran and Patton with 3 each and Cowart with 2 while Patton led in blocked shots with 5.

## Lady Indians' JV win two, finish with winning record

By Jerry Kendall  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

When the Towns County Lady Indian JV's Basketball Team began the 2013 season with just a 2-5 record, one might have been hard pressed to expect them to rally for a winning record by the time the season was complete.

But that feat has been accomplished as the Lady Indians rallied for a 6-2 finish and an overall 8-7 record with one scheduled game being canceled due to Prince Avenue not having enough players to compete. The Lady Indians reached the 8-7 record last week by taking wins over Commerce at home and over Providence Christian Academy in Lilburn.

In the home game against Commerce on Tuesday, the Lady Indians exploded out to an 11-0 lead by the 2:47 mark of the first quarter and never looked back as they led 13-2, 23-9, and 39-15 at the quarter breaks in taking a 47-22 victory. Top individual



Towns' JV during its win over Commerce. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

quarterly scoring totals included 7 points by Jocelyn Byers and 4 by Savannah Dyer in the first and 5 by Byers and 4 by Brooke Smith in the third.

Scoring leaders for the game were Byers with 15 points, Dyer with 11, Smith with 9, and Taylor McCarter with 8 while Byers and Alyssa Pyle led in as-

sists with 3 each with Smith right behind with 2.

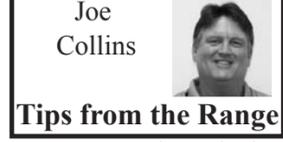
At Providence Christian on Thursday, the Lady Indians built a big, early lead which was led by 7 points by Jocelyn Byers and 5 by Savannah Smith and withstood a strong mid game challenge by the Lady Storm in pulling away for a 42-29 victory.

The Lady Indians led 9-1 after one quarter and 14-1 and then 16-3 by the 2:44 mark of the second before the Lady Storm used three treys to advantage in rallying to within 16-13 at intermission and to a 20-20 tie by the 4:13 mark of the third quarter.

The tie seemed to arouse the Lady Indians who used a Dyer basket at exactly the four minute mark of the third quarter as a trigger for a 17-3 run extending to the 5:47 mark of the fourth for a 37-23 lead.

Byers led the run with 9 points, coming on two treys, a deuce from just inside the 3-point line, and a free throw. Alyssa Pyle then followed a Providence field goal by outscoring the Lady Storm 5-4 in the final 3:22 of the game as the Lady Indians took the 42-29 victory.

Byers took scoring honors for the game with 18 points with other leaders being Dyer with 9 and Pyle with 7 while Pyle led in assists with 3 and was followed by Dyer and Taylor McCarter with 2 each.



Joe Collins

### Tips from the Range

Last week we looked at how to hit the ball low and I hope many of you have had some success because I know you have been practicing, right?

Really, you need to practice if you want to enjoy your time spent on the course. At least get some plastic balls and hit out in the yard. These "almost balls" will give you direct feedback and that will help improve your technique.

It is difficult to change your ball flight but it is not impossible when using the proper technique. Good fundamentals take time to learn so don't give up after the first or second attempt but stay with the correct way of working on your swing and when you master your desired need, it will stick.

We have learned so far that the plane of your swing affects the ball flight, so let's look at how the swing arc can help you hit it higher. The plane of the swing is the related angle of your arms to the top of your shoulders on the backswing. Remember, a steeper arc, or plane, will promote a higher ball flight.

In trying to obtain and steeper arc, you will face a balance problem that has to be dealt with in order to make solid contact. If you try to get the club higher in the backswing, you will tend to tilt forward over the ball and this affects balance. It will typically cause you to get your center of balance more over your toes and this action will stop the lower body from finishing its rotation.

If you limit the lower body rotation, you will cause the hands to become the source your power and that is devastating to your swing. The hands can supply some power at impact but only in a much disciplined golf swing. For most of us, the hands only function should be to hold on to the club.

One of the best descriptions I have read about how to maintain balance is from the late and great Ben Hogan, arguably one of the best ball strikers in the history of golf. He said and I quote, "You need to feel

as though your lower posterior is in contact with the edge of a stool until after impact." This is a perfect example of what it feels like to maintain the counter weight needed to keep your weight away from impact so your arms can extend. This is where you will have trouble trying to get a steeper arc so watch out for heaviness in the front part of your feet on the backswing and the return downswing. Always stay away from the ball through impact.

Okay, so how do you get a steeper arc and not destroy your balance during the whole of your swing? Again, I am glad you asked.

It simply requires you to swing your front shoulder in a more downward direction toward the ball and then more straight up on the downswing. DO NOT MOVE THE BALL FORWARD IN YOUR STANCE! Keep the ball where you would normally have it in your set-up because the steeper arc will change your ball impact zone and will cause you to hit up on the ball more. If you move the ball up in your stance, you will most likely not even make contact unless you are a very disciplined swinger of the club and can modify your weight transfer like Bubba Watson did out of the woods at Augusta on hole 10 to win his first Major.

Remember to always keep your head behind the ball and maintain your posture (rear-end out over your heels) so your spine will stay fixed in its original set-up position as your shoulders rotate around said spine. This is very important when trying to hit the ball higher or you will dip and change your balance.

Now here comes the fun part and something you seldom hear. Swing hard! A more aggressive swing will help your shoulders turn correctly when the swing plane is steeper and give you a more dominant following shoulder. This will help keep the club head closer to the ground for a more solid impact.

Changing your ball flight requires practice so if your desire is to learn to hit the ball higher or lower, get ready for some practice.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

## NASCAR 2013

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

### FIVE NEW MEMBERS IN NASCAR HALL OF FAME

Buck Baker, Cotton Owens, Herb Thomas, Leonard Wood, and Rusty Wallace were enshrined into the NASCAR Hall of Fame, in Charlotte, NC, February 8.

Four were pioneers, building the sport during its formative years. The fifth one, Rusty Wallace, ushered it into modern times.

Buck Baker a two-time NASCAR premier series champion in 1956-57, was the first to ever win back-to-back titles in NASCAR's top level. A 46-time winner, he joined the ranks after becoming the first driver to capture consecutive championships in NASCAR's premier series.

He earned his first championship driving cars for legendary owner Carl Kiekhaefer, but won his second one driving his own cars. Baker passed his immense driving talent to his son Buddy, who also won 19 times in the premier series, and inducted his father during tonight's ceremony.

"Buck always made an impression on people, good or bad," said widow Susan Baker, who accepted the induction on Baker's behalf. "If you ever met him, you never forgot him. It was never boring being married to Buck, either. He could make me laugh like no one else could, and he had that same effect on others."

Baker passed away in 2002.

Cotton Owens joins Junior Johnson as a Hall of Famer who excelled as both driver and owner. The Union, SC, native won nine times as a driver in stock cars and more than 100 races in NASCAR's Modified division. The latter feat earned him the moniker of "King of the Modifieds." He won the 1966 championship with fellow Hall of Famer David Pearson.

"I know this is a biased opinion, but in our family's book, there was no better racer than Cotton Owens," said Kyle Davis, Owens' grandson, who accepted the induction on his grandfather's behalf. "My grandfather was one of the most humble, most loyal and hardest working men I've ever met. He took great pride in the fact that he could build a race car from the ground up; engine, chassis, transmission, you name it and drive it to the race track and then drive it to victory lane. He was a wizard at both turning wrenches and behind the wheel."



Hall of Famers Rusty Wallace and Dale Earnhardt in Japan in 1996.

Owens passed away in 2012.

Herb Thomas was one of NASCAR's first superstars thanks to his premier series championships in 1951 and 1953. Becoming the first driver to win multiple championships, Thomas laid the groundwork for a record-setting career. His 48 victories in 228 starts translates to a winning percentage of 21.05 percent, a series record.

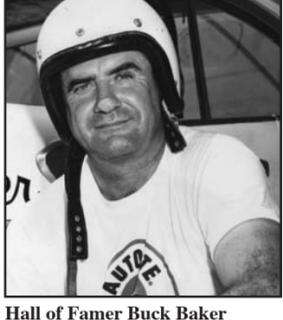
"I truly believe this is the greatest honor a driver could receive," Joel Thomas, his grandson said. "My father would have been very honored and humbled in receiving this recognition. ... Thank you all for helping him reach his dreams. Thank you to all of his fans for cheering him on and keeping his memories alive."

Herb Thomas passed away in 2000.

Rusty Wallace enjoyed one of the most successful careers in modern-day NASCAR. Wallace won the 1989 series championship. For 16 consecutive seasons, from 1986-2001, Wallace scored at least one win per season. That tied him for the third-longest streak in history.

"I look out in this crowd and I see some of the biggest stars in history," said an emotional Wallace. "I am humbled that I'm standing up here, and I just can't thank everybody enough for selecting me to be in the NASCAR Hall of Fame."

Leonard Wood joined his brother Glen, who was elected last year. Leonard served as chief mechanic for the Wood Brothers his entire career, winning a total of 94 races with some of the biggest names in NASCAR history including



Hall of Famer Buck Baker

Furnished by NASCAR

brother Glen, Marvin Panch, David Pearson and Cale Yarborough. "It's certainly a high honor to be inducted into the NASCAR Hall of Fame, especially right behind my brother, Glen, and two of our former drivers, David [Pearson] and Cale [Yarborough]," Wood said. "Glen and I always did things together; we learned together and we won together."

### START AND PARK TEAMS TO GET LESS

NASCAR will reallocate prize money from the last five spots in the field this season in an attempt to make it less profitable for teams to start and park.

"We moved prize money higher in the purse, so if someone's intent is solely to run a lap or two and park, the revenue stream shrinks," NASCAR president Mike Helton said Tuesday during an "Autoweek" panel discussion in Detroit.

According to NASCAR, each position from 43rd through 39th will receive \$4,000 less for each position. For example, 39th will receive \$4,000 less than

38th, 40th \$4,000 less than 39th, etc. NASCAR spokesman Kerry Tharp emphasized this is not a reduction in purses, that the overall prize money in 2013 will increase slightly. He said the money taken away from the last five spots will be redistributed "throughout the remainder of the field."

Many fans don't like teams that start a race with the intent of only running a handful of laps and collecting a check.

Most of the drivers and crewmen working on those teams, don't like it either, but a job is a job. To a racer, it's still a better way to pay the mortgage than the alternative of a non-racing job.

Track owners label start-and-park teams as frauds and robbers. Bruton Smith recently said they are doing a "disservice" to the sport.

Less than ten years ago, this wasn't a problem. Start-and-parks didn't exist on the Cup level. Good teams simply went home after failing to qualify for races.

But with the economic decline, many teams are no longer around, and other Cup organizations have cut back on the number of cars they field each week.

Most independent team owners in Nationwide and the Camping World Truck Series decided that moving to Cup wasn't financially and competitively feasible.

The departure of those teams opened the door for new owners to enter the sport. In some ways, that's a good thing and other ways it isn't.

The only problem is that these new owners don't have enough money to run an entire race and be competitive. So they start the race and park their cars early. Some do it just to pocket easy money.

NASCAR must decide whether a 43-car field — the current standard — will ever be economically feasible again, because by cutting the purse for the lesser funded teams, they're going to push them completely out of Cup racing.

If NASCAR isn't willing to reduce the number of cars in a Sprint Cup field, if it is so intent on clinging to the bold idea that anyone can enter the sport, then it needs to do something to help small teams. It needs to make it more feasible for new teams to be competitive enough to run more laps.

## Towns County Rec Dept. 2013 Baseball \ Softball Registration

The Towns County Recreation Dept. will be holding registration for softball and baseball for ages 8 thru 14 thru February 23, 2013.

The cost for registration will be \$45.

Sign-ups will be held at the Towns County Recreation Department. Our hours of operation are Monday thru Friday 9 a.m. till 8 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. till 4 p.m.

Sun., Feb. 17, Qualifying for Daytona 500, first two positions; 1 p.m. (ET); TV: Fox.

**Racing Trivia Question:** Does former Cup champion Terry Labonte plan to do any racing in 2013?

**Last Week's Question:** Who will be Brad Keselowski's teammate this year in the Cup series at Penske Racing? Answer: Joey Logano will be the second driver at Penske Racing.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at hodge@race500.com. NT(Feb13,21)9gg