

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Offense kicks into high gear, propels Lady Indians to Elite 8

By Jerry Kendall
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Staff Writer

The Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Basketball Team got their "second season" off to a fine start last Friday by taking a first round, home court 83-73 victory in the Georgia Class A Public State Tournament over the Calhoun County Lady Cougars from Edison in southwest Georgia near Albany.

The victory extended the Lady Indians' record to 25-4 as the Lady Cougars saw their season come to an end with a fine 19-9 record while facing several top of the line opponents.

Five of the Lady Cougar's losses came at the hands of fellow Region 1A foes Randolph-Clay, Mitchell County, and Seminole County with those three teams and the Lady Indians combining as half of the teams remaining for the Elite Eight round of the Class A Public State Tournament. The other three losses for the Lady Cougars in addition to the region foes and the Lady Indians came at the hands of Class AAAAAA Lowndes, Class AAAAA Dougherty, and Class AAA Early County. The Lady Cougars also claimed victories over Dougherty and Early County during the season and fell by just two points in one of two games played against top seed Randolph-Clay.

The win over the Lady Cougars set the stage for a home court Elite Eight confrontation for the Lady Indians with Claxton High School on Tuesday of that week with the winner of that game qualifying for the State Final Four round against the winner of a Tuesday game between Gordon Lee and Seminole County.

With the state tournament schedule and arrival of the Towns County Herald to readers not always conducive to learning of games in time to attend them, advance information about potential match ups will continue as in last week's newspaper.

The Final Four game featuring the winner of the game between the Lady Indians and Claxton will be held this Friday, March 1st, at 4 p.m. at Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, located some twenty five miles south of Macon. If victorious over Claxton and in the semi final round at Fort Valley State, the Lady Indians would qualify for the Class A Public



Senior Dadrian Blythe battles in the paint against Calhoun County.



Junior Kelsie Cowart takes it strong to the hoop in the first half.



Towns County High School basketball cheerleaders. Photos by Lowell Nicholson



Eryn Cochran and Stephanie Patton

State Championship game at 3 p.m. next Thursday, March 7th, in the Macon Coliseum.

The Lady Indians got off to a quick start against Calhoun County, taking a 2-0 lead less than half a minute into the game on a field goal by Kelsie Cowart but they otherwise struggled in the opening minutes of the game, due largely to several turnovers against aggressive Lady Cougar defensive pressure. The Lady Cougars took advantage in vaulting out to a 6-2 lead by the 5:55 mark of the first quarter.

The Lady Indians struck with a vengeance after that, however, by embarking on a 15-2 run between the 5:06 and forty two seconds marks for a 17-8 lead.

Stephanie Patton and Cowart provided most of the scoring load in first quarter action with eight and seven points respectively with a trey by Patton at 3:04 providing a Lady Indian lead of 9-8 they would have seriously threatened but never relinquish.

The 15-2 Lady Indian run and other similar scoring spurts during the game sometimes gave the impression that the Lady Indians might get a

comfortable win but that would not be the case as the Lady Cougars would have an answer for each Lady Indian run all the way up to the mid point of the fourth quarter. On the other hand, it can be said that the Lady Indians had an answer as well to each challenge to their lead by the Lady Cougars. The Lady Cougars first struck for a trey and a putback basket in the final twenty five seconds of the first quarter in reducing the 17-8 Towns lead to 17-13 and then added a field goal just twenty four seconds into the second for a narrow 17-15 Lady Indian lead.

A 10-2 Lady Indian run followed and had them ahead 27-17 by the 4:28 mark of the second quarter and they responded to a trey and field goal by the Lady Cougars with by adding an 8-0 run for a 35-22 advantage with 2:34 on the clock. The two teams pretty much matched points the remainder of the quarter but with two free throws by the Lady Cougars with 1.8 seconds on the clock getting them within 42-32 at intermission. Six different Lady Indians put points on the scoreboard in the second quarter with leaders

being Patton with eight, Eryn Cochran with five, and Emily Anderson and Bailey Sutton with four each.

The Lady Cougars opened the third quarter with a field goal for a single digits Towns lead of 42-34 but the Lady Indians struck for a 13-4 run between the 7:26 and 4:06 marks for a 55-38 lead, their first of two leads of seventeen points. Five different Lady Indians entered the scoring column during the run with Patton leading with five points on a trey and a deuce.

Cochran matched a Lady Cougar basket for the second seventeen points TCHS lead of 57-40 with 3:41 left in the third quarter. Anderson then contributed her second and third field goals of the quarter for the Lady Indians but the Lady Cougars more than matched those baskets with eight points of their own the final 3:17 of the quarter to edge to within 61-48 as the teams entered the fourth quarter.

The Lady Cougars used six for seven free throw shooting and a trey for a 9-3 run and just a 64-57 deficit by the 6:48 mark of the fourth quarter. The Lady Indians seemed to regain

control when Cochran twice beat the Calhoun County press for an assist to Patton for a basket and then by taking a defensive rebound coast to coast for a field goal of her own with the Lady Indians again ahead by double digits at 68-57 with 5:55 on the clock.

Once again, the Lady Cougars had an answer, however, as they struck for nine straight points, this time in just a minute and five seconds, ending at 4:34, and the Lady Indian lead was just 68-66. Cochran gave the Lady Indians a 70-66 advantage with two free throws just six seconds later but lady luck smiled on the Lady Cougars at 4:17 when a 3-point attempt far off the mark hit high on the backboard but somehow fell straight into the basket for just a 70-69 Lady Indian lead.

The Lady Indians may have been feeling a bit snake bitten by that shot and the Lady Cougars perhaps feeling that they were a team of destiny but the Lady Cougars couldn't capitalize as they went more than three minutes after that without entering the scoring column. The Lady Indians did capitalize on the sudden Calhoun County scoring drought

although not in an especially immediate time frame.

Cochran sank one of two free throw attempts on each of three trips to the foul line between the 4:10 and 2:14 marks as the Lady Indians edged out to a 73-69 advantage while the Lady Cougars missed a pair of charity tosses with a chance to tie the score at the 3:10 mark. Cochran then sank two free throws at 1:33 and Patton took a defensive rebound and went coast to coast for a three point play at 1:17 and the Lady Indians were suddenly back in control with a 78-69 advantage.

The Lady Cougars finally broke their scoring drought with a free throw at 1:05 but Cowart more than matched it when she drove the baseline for a basket at fifty four seconds for an 80-70 Lady Indian lead.

The last gasp for the Lady Cougars came at the forty three seconds mark when they sank their fifth trey of the game but the Lady Indians matched it on two more free throws by Cochran and one by Patton as the Lady Indians closed out a hard fought 83-73 victory.

After the Lady Cougars closed to within the aforementioned 68-66 with 4:34 left in the game, Cochran sank nine of twelve free throw attempts and Patton two of three for overall eleven for fifteen accuracy, spoiling the Lady Cougars' strategy of hoping for enough free throw misses to overtake the Lady Indians.

The Lady Cougars made just one of four free throw attempts during the same time frame. Prior to the late Lady Indian success at the foul line, the Lady Cougars had appeared to be the more aggressive defensive team but held a significant advantage at the foul line. In the end, free throw shooting totals were nearly identical for the game with the Lady Indians sinking 19 of 28 and the Lady Cougars 18 of 28.

Scoring leaders for the Lady Indians were Patton with 27 points, Cochran with 21, Cowart with 11, Anderson with 10, and Dadrian Blythe and Sutton with 6 each. Cochran took the lead in assists with 8 and in rebounds with 6 while Patton took second honors in assists with 5 and was tied with Anderson for second in rebounds with 5.

Karlle Albach, Blythe, Cowart, and Sutton contributed 3 rebounds each while Cochran, Patton, and Sutton tied for the lead in steals with 3 each and Anderson and Blythe were right behind with 2 each.

Towns County baseball gets underway at Union

By Joe Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Blairsville - The Towns County Indians baseball team had its season opener last Tuesday at the Panther Athletic complex located on the grounds of Union County High School.

The weather was cold but the Indians' bats were colder as the Panthers won 6-0.

The Indians were only able to produce 2 hits in 23 at bats and left 7 runners on base, while the Panthers scored 6 runs on as many hits aided by 2 crucial errors by the Indians. The Indians kept the Panther bats in check somewhat - holding Union without an extra-base hit for the entire contest.

However, timely hitting and aggressive base running aided the Panthers' cause.

Junior Harrison Hobbs was the first Indian on base for the 2013 season as he was hit by a pitch in the first inning. A passed ball and a sacrifice moved him to third but the tribe was unable to draw first blood as the side struck out.

The second inning proved exciting as senior Joseph Foster got aboard on a walk and junior Payton Chambers also drew a base on balls to put runners at first and second.

A sacrifice by junior Slade Davenport put runners in scoring position, but that was as close as the Indians got to scoring until senior Dillon Diehl reached second in the sixth but found himself stranded as the inning ended.

Diehl opened the game at pitcher for the Indians and faced 18 Panther hitters striking out 3 and giving up 3 unearned runs on 4 hits in 4 innings pitched with no base on balls.



Towns County Indians baseball in action at Union County last week. Photos by Lowell Nicholson

He threw a total of 56 pitches with 39 of those pitches finding the strike zone.

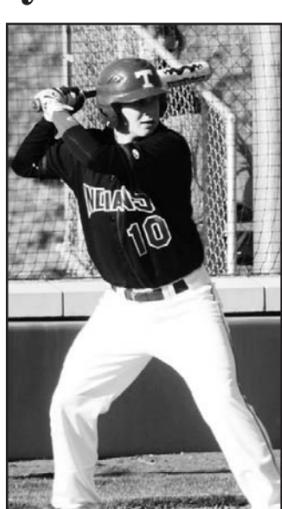
Hobbs then took the mound in the bottom of the fifth and faced 11 Panther hitters striking out 4 and giving up 3 runs on 2 hits in 2 innings, 2 of which were earned. He threw a total of 42 pitches with 28 of those for strikes giving up one base on balls.

The top of the sixth inning found the Indians trailing

4-0 as sophomore Zach Sewell and Diehl both delivered hits which nearly got a rally going but the Panther pitching proved too much and they were left stranded.

The Panthers added 2 more runs in the bottom of the inning and the Indians went out 3 up and 3 down in the top of the seventh to give the Panthers the win.

The Indians played hard and made some solid contact at



the plate, but just couldn't get the ball to drop for hits. Their defense played well, but had a couple of throwing errors that really hurt, those being in the second and fifth innings allowing runners to remain on base that eventually scored.

The Indians will face the Panthers again on Feb. 27th at home.

Game time is 5 p.m. so make plans now to come out and support the team.

Melton reaches 300, named GACA North All-Star Coach

By Jerry Kendall
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Staff Writer

Towns County Lady Indians Head Basketball Coach Jim Melton quietly reached his 300th varsity coaching victory when his Lady Indians took a 55-37 victory over Providence Christian in the semi finals of the Region 8A Tournament at Hebron Christian Academy in Dacula on February 15.

Prior to the Lady Indians' first home court appearance since the region tournament in the first round of the state tournament last Tuesday, Melton was given a plaque in honor of his passing Dion Eller last year for the coach with the most career wins in basketball at TCHS with 273 and a trophy for the 300 career wins by the Lady Indians and TCHS Athletic Director Jonathan Gibson.

With the 2013 season still in progress at this writing, Melton has 302 victories after his Lady Indians added the Region 8A Tournament Championship with a win over George Walton Academy on February 16 and the first round state tournament victory over Calhoun County last Friday. His teams have averaged an astounding 20.1 wins per season for his nearly completed fifteen years at the helm at one of the smallest public schools in the state. The Lady Indians have won twenty or more games in each of the last seven seasons and a total of nine times overall under Melton's direction.

The Lady Indians won their fifth and sixth consecutive sub region tournament championships in Melton's first two seasons as head coach in what would turn out to be the final two such opportunities prior to these tournaments being discontinued after several decades in favor of holding only an overall region tournament.

Coach Melton is presented with a plaque for his 300th win.



The Lady Indians have now won the last three Region 8-A Tournament Championships and four of the last five.

As an added tribute to Melton, he has been selected as a head coach for one of the girls teams in the upcoming Georgia Athletic Coaches Association (GACA) Basketball All Star Games to be held at Savannah Atlantic University in Armstrong on March 23rd. Melton's selection as a coach follows by two years the selection of Lady Indian senior Jordan Moss for the first appearance by either a Lady Indian or Indian in one of these games.

The GACA was established in 1938 for the advancement of athletics in Georgia and is dedicated to high school coaches in the State of Georgia. The all star games serve as a showcase for top girls and boys players from all around the state with a total of four games to be played, including a Junior Showcase game and a Senior Showcase game for both the girls and boys. Melton will serve as head coach of the Girls North Junior Team which will square off with a team from South Georgia.