

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Tennis splits with Rabun; rematch Thursday

By Joe Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Indians tennis teams hosted rival Rabun County last Thursday and came away with a 1-1 split finding the Lady Indians winning 3-2 overall and the boys falling in their match.

The Lady Indians have a strong team this year with several girls competing for the top three spots and more talent working in the wings. The match with Rabun found the girls facing some solid competition in both the single and doubles matches. Sophomore Carly Gilfilian won her match on the singles side dominating her opponent 8-2 while junior Courtney Marshall and junior Lesleigh Irvin won their doubles match 8-5 and junior Jasmine Forrester and senior Mackenzie Mirandi won their doubles match 9-7. The three wins gave the Indians the over-



Towns County tennis photos by Lowell Nicholson

all win for the match 3-2.

The boys had a hard time getting their game together against Rabun. It is a tough time for the guys since they are low in experience with only 3 returning players and 4 brand new players on the team with several of the guys just now coming over as other TCHS sports are ending.

"We are in a rebuilding period with the boys right now but so far the guys are progressing nicely and I hope to see them much improved as the season continues," said Head Coach Heather Moss. The boys dropped their matches to Rabun and lost in the end in both the single and doubles matches.

The TCHS tennis stars

of the week are Courtney Marshall and Lesleigh Irvin for the doubles win against Rabun.

"These girls have a good overall attitude and work very hard to improve. I was impressed with the way they were able to pull back, reset and work together to beat the number one doubles team of Rabun," declared Moss.

Moss is working on technique and is seeing improvement in both teams. The teams are not playing an Area schedule this season and will be facing some tough AA teams in hopes of getting ready for the Area Tournament this April in Rome. Who knows, this strategy worked for Head Coach Jeannie Ledford as her girls won state.

Their next match is at Rabun County High School on February 28 beginning at 4 p.m.

Make plans now to come and support the TCHS tennis teams and see some exciting action on the Wildcat courts.

Joe Collins

Tips from the Range

Last week we looked at how the turn affects the golf swing and its importance in keeping the core of the body rotating around the spine. This gives you a better chance of making solid contact at impact which will promote consistency and accuracy. Another huge benefit in turning correctly is that it utilizes the larger muscles in the back, chest and legs. The activation of these larger muscle groups is crucial in achieving optimum distance and that is something many of us strive for, more distance.

It is not uncommon these days to see a tour player crush a drive 350 yards or smoke a 5-iron 225 yards or hit a wedge from 150 yards. Distance on average is longer than in years past and some of this increase is due in part to the enhancement of today's equipment but mostly it is because long hitters have learned which body motions provide the most power.

It is not very hard to pick up 10 or 15 yards overall but to increase your drives and irons by 30 to 50 yards; you will need to change your swing to produce a faster swing speed with more solid impact. Golf clubs have sweet spots in the center of the face and you need to hit that sweet spot perfectly to gain true distance. Not everyone will hit mammoth drives but all golfers can increase their average distances even if they are seeing that distance decline with age. Swing speeds will typically slow as we become more "mature" but you can still maximize the swing you have by swinging correctly.

Believe it or not but true distance is directly related to accuracy. It is amazing how accurate tour players can be when they also hit it so far. If you utilize your body correctly to maximize distance, it also produces proper accuracy because the swing path is typically correct with minimum hand action. Overactive hands will destroy distance and accuracy so keep the hands quiet until just before impact.

The next thing we need to focus on when trying to hit the ball farther is club head speed through impact. It is vital that the swing speed be at it's fastest just before impact with the maximum speed of the club at the point of contact with the ball. This is what we call acceleration. The club picks up speed on the way down out of the top just the same as a child does when going down a slide. Slow at the top and fast at the bottom. Don't throw the hands at the ball from the top of the arc but let the body generate arm speed on the

downswing. Weight transfer in conjunction with your turn is the next concern you need to have to make sure the club accelerates on the downswing. This is known as timing and it is also very important in gaining distance. You must transfer your weight from the back foot to the front foot as you turn around the spine on the downswing. The key to this is re-aligning the arms and the center of the chest on the downswing. By the time the arms move from the top of the arc to half the distance from the top to impact, the arms have to be in front of the energy you built up through the weight transfer.

Check out Phil Mickleson's swing on Youtube to see one of the best weight transfers in professional golf. His leg drive is amazing and creates a tremendous amount of energy. He really depends on his timing to maximize his distance and his arm speed out of the top is impressive. This is why he hits it so far. His arms are in tune with his weight transfer to the front foot and they get back in front of his chest at the right time in the downswing.

To correctly and efficiently produce good timing and therefore proper power you must look at your leg drive during the weight transfer. The legs must be active to increase swing speed and produce more distance in your shots. The downswing starts in the feet and works its way up through the legs and into the arms with the hands pouring on the coal at the very last second before impact. A golfing buddy of mine Chris Robbins at Butternut Creek Golf Course has some of the best hand action you will see and believe me when I tell you that he hits it a country mile. If you play "The Nut" you may see him, check out how fast his hands are through the ball as they follow his weight transfer.

Adding distance to your ball flight is very difficult, I will not lie to you. But you can gain distance by working on your turn in conjunction with a proper weight transfer. Allow your legs to become more active and use your balance and club positions to enhance your results. Don't be afraid to move on the ball; just remember to keep the top of your spine behind impact. You can always tone things down and stay more still after you develop some feel for moving the weight correctly. Use the hip rotation to clear a path for the upper body and try and keep the club in front of yourself on the downswing. These actions activate the larger muscle groups and this in turn will increase your club head speed.

Remember that practice really will help your next round so get out and work on your game. Good luck and I will see you on the course!

Soccer teams fall at Union County in season opener

By Joe Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County High School Indians soccer teams traveled to Union County last Thursday to challenge the Panthers at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

It was a rainy night as the Indians had their backs against the wall against a tough Panther squad with the Lady Indians suffering a 2-1 loss while the boys lost a rain shortened game 5-0.

The Lady Panthers led at the break after scoring from close range at 4:33 in the first half.

Union held its lead well into the second period until a blocked shot was rebounded and laced into the goal by Kaila Reece to tie the game at 1-1 with 24 minutes to play.

The game was close and stayed tied until Union hit a 20-yard goal from the left corner at 6:07 to give them the lead and the win.

The Indian defense was solid and forced many low percentage shots to keep the score close and frustrate the



Kaila Reece races after the ball during the first half at Union County. Reece would later tie things up with a goal. Photo/Todd Forrest

Lady Panthers' skipper, Coach Tim Hunter.

"Our girls were really in for a fight against a very good Towns team," Hunter said. "When Towns equalized the game at 1-1, I got a little worried wondering how we would respond, but we turned up the intensity and after several other good shots, we found the winner from the left side. We faced a really good team."

The boys faced a very tough Panther team who were

able to work the ball over the field with precision.

The Indians faced a strong offense that commanded the lanes and kept the ball out of the Indians control. The Indians were only able to make 9 shots at goal and were forced to fall back on defense most of the game.

Union held a 3-0 advantage at the break before two quick goals in the second half put the Indians away.

The rain began to fall



Indians in action at Union County. Photo/Joe Collins

hard as the second period was coming to a close. The officials, in agreement with both coaches called the game at the 74th minute, giving the Panthers the win.

The Indians next game will be at Fannin with the girls starting at 5 p.m. and the boys following at approximately 7 p.m. Make plans now to come out and support the Indians as they work on improving over last week's losses.

NASCAR 2013

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Johnson holds off Earnhardt at Daytona

Jimmie Johnson held off Dale Earnhardt Jr. to win Sunday's 55th Daytona 500. It was Johnson's second Daytona win and came in his 400th start.

"I had me a fast car and a lot of confidence there at the end," said Johnson. "We knew that if we could stay out of trouble and be near the front, we could win this thing."

After a caution with 23 laps to go, 2012 Cup champion Brad Keselowski held the lead ahead of Greg Biffle, Danica Patrick and Jeff Gordon. But soon Jimmie Johnson and Denny Hamlin entered the mix, making it a two-wide, 10-car battle for the lead.

After running single file most of the day, the field bunched up after the caution and engaged in a wild two- and three-wide battle.

Keselowski, who had damage to his car from two earlier crashes, powered to the front and battled Johnson, the driver he beat for the 2012 championship, for the lead.

With the leaders racing hard, a caution for debris on Lap 191 slowed the race and set up the sprint to the finish.

In the remaining few laps, Johnson's only challenge came from Dale Earnhardt Jr., who came up two car lengths short.

"I was able to get a run off turn 2 with Mark (Martin) pushing me," said Earnhardt. "But when we started out of 4, I lost Mark and from then on, I couldn't catch Jimmie."

An early crash during lap 32, took out eight cars, including three of the top contenders, Tony Stewart, Kevin Harvick, and Casey Mears.

The field was racing in a tight draft when Kasey Kahne had to check up and Kyle Busch got into the back of him, causing Kahne to spin in the big pack.

"I wanted to race. I didn't want to sit there running single file up against the wall



Kyle Larson's white No. 32 car spins and hits grandstand fence during final lap of Daytona Nationwide race. Courtesy of Harlow Reynolds.

like everybody was doing," Kahne said.

Kahne's No. 5 Chevy spun and slammed into the car of Juan Pablo Montoya, igniting the eight-car, chain-reaction crash.

Harvick appeared to get hit from behind, causing him to spin and crash into Stewart. Sprint Cup champion Brad Keselowski also was involved, as were Jamie McMurray, Kurt Busch and Casey Mears.

Harvick entered the race as the favorite after winning the Sprint Unlimited last Saturday and his Budweiser Duel qualifying race Thursday. He was trying to become the first driver to sweep all three races.

"(It looked like) Kyle Busch turned the 5 ... That's just part of the game," Harvick said. "We had a great week. We'll rebound next week."

Posseiter Danica Patrick ran up front for most of the race. She was third on lap 199, but lost several positions on the last lap.

"I kept thinking about what I would do near the end, but I needed a hole and someone to help me," she said. "I had the feeling that if I went low, I would be freight-trained backwards."

"But at the end of the



Jimmie Johnson, winner of the 55th Daytona 500.

Two of Joe Gibbs' cars, the No. 20 driven by Matt Kenseth, and the No. 18 piloted by Kyle Busch had engine failures on laps 150 and 151 respectively.

Top-10 finishers: 1. Jimmie Johnson, 2. Dale Earnhardt, 3. Mark Martin, 4. Brad Keselowski, 5. Ryan Newman, 6. Greg Biffle, 7. Regan Smith, 8. Danica Patrick, 9. Michael McDowell, 10. J. J. Yeley.

28 FANS INJURED IN DAYTONA NATIONWIDE WRECK

At least 28 people were injured in a last-lap crash during Saturday's Nationwide race.

Daytona International Speedway president Joie Chitwood III indicated that 14 spectators were transported to medical facilities off-property and 14 others were treated on

site. Only nine remained in the hospital late Sunday night.

Tony Stewart won the race, but the elation of his victory disappeared in the wake of the heart-stopping wreck that saw Kyle Larson's car demolished after flying into the main grandstand near the start/finish line.

As Stewart dodged the crash and crossed the finish line, the front clip of Larson's car sheared off, ripping the engine out of its compartment. The front suspension and engine ended up on the walkway at the bottom of the stands.

Regan Smith led as the cars approached the checkered flag, but Smith tried to block Brad Keselowski, who was running second, and turned across the nose of Keselowski's car, and for the next few minutes, mayhem reigned on the track, as cars slid, spun, and crashed, in almost every direction.

"We made a move to try and win the race," Keselowski said. "We were in the catbird seat. Regan was in a good spot. He was first and I was second, and we were pushing. I kind of had the run and the move to win the race, and Regan obviously tried to block it, and that's understandable."

Larson climbed from his car almost immediately and was evaluated and released from the infield care center.

Sam Hornish Jr. crossed the stripe in second place, followed by rookie Alex Bowman. Dale Earnhardt Jr., Parker Kligerman, Brian Scott, Justin Allgaier, Eric McClure, Robert Richardson Jr., and Travis Pastrana.

The last-lap wreck wasn't the only serious incident of the event. A 13-car wreck in Turns 1 and 2, triggered by contact between the No. 43 Ford Mustang of Michael Annett and the No. 3 Chevrolet Camaro of Austin Dillon -- both championship hopefuls -- stopped the race after 116 laps and set up

the finish.

The two females in the race didn't fare well. Danica Patrick only lasted 31 laps before experiencing mechanical problems. Johanna Long, the other 20-year old female driver, who is running in Danica's shadow, might have had a top-10 finish except for getting caught up in the other big wreck on lap 115. She finished 27th.

KESELOWSKI IN HOT WATER WITH NASCAR OWNERS

NASCAR Chairman Brian France and Vice Chairwoman Lesa France Kennedy met with Keselowski on Friday after he made public comments questioning the NASCAR business model.

Keselowski, who is known for his outspoken opinions, was quoted in a USA Today story last Friday, as saying the NASCAR business model of teams relying heavily on sponsorship is flawed, that there is too much fighting between the teams and that the tracks and the sport in general is not television friendly.

Keselowski tweeted his own confirmation of the meeting Friday, which allowed him to ask questions of NASCAR's top officials and for them to provide the sport's new champion with more information on issues in the sport.

"Spent some time with Lesa and Brian from the NASCAR team after yesterday's article, the passion we all share for our sport is amazing!" Keselowski said.

Keselowski will not be penalized for his comments. NASCAR fined him in 2012 for comments critical of its new fuel injection system and for carrying his cell phone in his car during races.

In the USA Today story, Keselowski said Bill France Jr., father of Brian and Lesa, had a better relationship with the shareholders in the sport.

France Jr. gave up day-to-day control of NASCAR to Brian in 2003. He died in 2007.

"France Jr. had relationships with the sponsors, drivers and teams," Keselowski told USA Today. "Now we don't have that. Those three other pieces are segregated. Those three pieces need to get together. And until all three of those can unite, we're a house divided, and we're making bad decisions that are affecting how to generate revenue for the sport."

"In today's sports world, you have to be very powerful in drawing people to TV, and we're not TV-friendly. That's one of the key areas for success. Part of that is we're not delivering a product. And we're fighting the tracks."

NASCAR, run by Brian France and owned primarily by his sister Lesa and uncle Jim, sanctions the Sprint Cup Series. The France family also owns a majority of stock in International Speedway Corp., which operates 12 tracks that have Cup events. Lesa France Kennedy also is the Chairwoman of ISC.

WEEKEND RACING: The Sprint and Nationwide teams are at the 1-mile Phoenix, AZ track. The trucks do not race again until April 6.

Sat., Mar. 2, Nationwide Series, race 2 of 33, Starting time: 4:30 pm ET; TV: ESPN2.

Sun., Mar. 3, Sprint Cup, race 2 of 36. Starting time: 3 pm ET; TV: FOX.

Racing Trivia Question: When was the first NASCAR race at Phoenix International Raceway?

Last Week's Question: How many times did Dale Earnhardt Sr. win the Daytona 500? Answer: His only win came in 1998.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at hodges@race500.com.