

Towns County Sports

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Towns 12&U basketball claims District Title

By Shawn Jarrard
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Champs!
The Towns County 12&U Midget basketball team defeated Commerce to win the District 7 Class C Championship Game on Monday, March 2.

And it was a great game.

Commerce scored in the first 15 seconds of the game, setting the pace for its 14-9 lead over Towns County at the end of the first quarter. To make matters worse, Commerce's morale received a boost from a half-court buzzer beater to close out the quarter.

The second quarter featured a battle for the lead, when the momentum swung the Indians' way as Mason Thomas hit a three-pointer at the buzzer, giving the Indians the lead 24-23 going into the half – a lead Towns County kept for the remainder of the game.

Close is one way to describe the matchup, which saw Towns County as the underdog leading into the game. Commerce has a larger pool of teams to pull its all-stars from, but that didn't seem to make a difference that day.

The Indians finished the game 63-57, cementing their spot as district champs and a place in the state tournament.

Mason Thomas finished the game with a top scoring 19 points, with five three-pointers and 20 rebounds.

Peyton Barrett was close behind with 15 points, followed by Collin Crowder with 12, Aiden Berrong with 6, Kyle Oakes with 6 and Adrian Hooper with 5.

"We played a 1-3-1 zone



The Towns County 12&U Indians hold their trophies high and proud after taking the District 7 Championship last week. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

to start with, and it was so-so," said Coach John Keister. "But then they started finding the holes down below, so I called a timeout and we went to a 3-2 zone. And that kind of stifled them a little bit. I like to change, not give them the same look every time unless you're strictly building up on what you're doing. Then, I said I want to change, and I played almost like a box-in-1 on their scorer. I put Aiden Berrong

him, and Aiden did a real fine job on shutting him down."

Berrong is the son of Dr. Darren Berrong, superintendent of Towns County Schools, and Dr. Berrong has coached some basketball in Towns County, too.

"I actually have to give the coaches a lot of credit in that last game we played," said Dr. Berrong. "My concern going in against Commerce was we wouldn't be able to adjust to

what Commerce was playing against us.

"And what I thought the coaches did very well, we started off in a 1-3-1 defense, and Commerce really started hurting us on the backside of that 1-3-1 and got a couple of quick layups. And the coaches made an adjustment that kept that backside from being open, and that really gave Commerce a lot of trouble."

Unfortunately, the Mid-

ets lost to Evans County at the state tournament in Morgan County on Saturday, March 7, effectively ending their illustrious season.

The Towns County Recreation and Conference Center also played host to the Class C State Tournament for the Mite basketball team on Friday, March 6, and Saturday, March 7.

Coaches Tony Berrong and Beth Rouse proudly

coached their boys during the tournament.

The Indian Mites played hard but lost game one on Friday to Bremen, 36-18, and lost their second game on Saturday to Morgan County, 29-16.

The Mite team was: Brack Burrell, Thor Fitzgibbons, Grant Ingram, Tanner Cunningham, Lane Rouse, Zane Floyd, Cabe Poston, Drew Sofield and Caleb Berrong.

Indians baseball splits with Fannin

By Shawn Jarrard
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Towns County won one and lost one in a doubleheader against Fannin County in Indian territory on Saturday, March 7.

Game one saw Fannin County score in the top of the first inning, and the score stayed that way until Fannin brought its total up to 2-0 in the fourth inning.

Will De Vries ended Fannin's fourth inning with his third strikeout of the game, bringing Towns County up to bat in the bottom of the fourth, where the Indians would finally take the lead.

De Vries was first to bat in the fourth, reaching base on a walk. Catcher Jackson Taylor hit a stand-up double to left field, sending De Vries to third base.

Fannin County walked Cruz Shook at the very next at bat, loading the bases with no outs.

Zach Sewell hit an RBI double, sending De Vries home for a score, while Taylor was tagged out at third.

Boone Moss smacked a 2-run double, with Sewell and Shook both scoring with one out. Fannin County changed pitchers – wisely – but walked Adam Barrett, the next Indian to step into the batter's box.

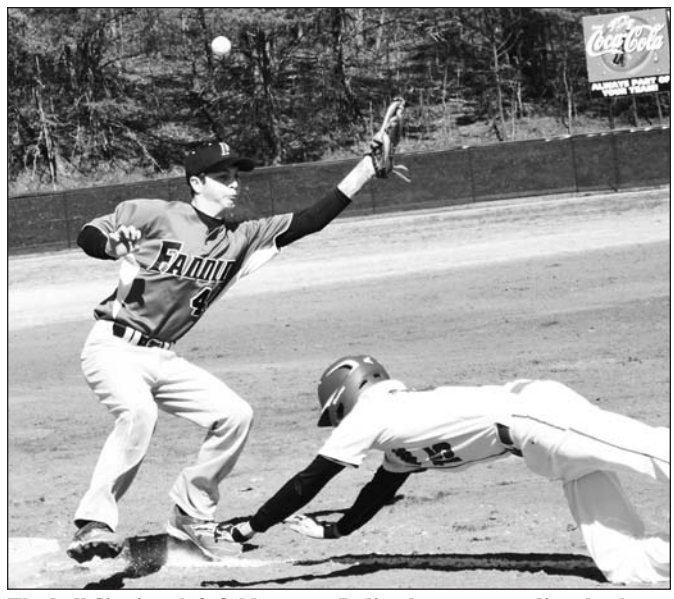
A pop fly and grounder to third brought Fannin County to the bat once more, but not before the Indians had taken the lead, 3-2.

Fannin tried to muster some action at the bat to begin the fifth inning, but a grounder followed by a fly ball to pitcher De Vries quickly brought up the Rebels' last batter of the inning, who grounded to second baseman Kobe Denton. Denton made short work of the would-be base runner, throwing him out at first.

Towns County took the bottom of the fifth inning as an opportunity to bump up the scoreboard.

De Vries hit a single up the middle, Shook hit a single of his own to move De Vries to third base, and Sewell hit another RBI to send De Vries over the plate. Moss hit a single, which ended in Shook scoring, and at the end of the fifth inning, Towns County was sitting pretty at 5-2.

Fannin County was able to score two more in the sixth inning, bringing in a Towns County lead of 5-4 to start the seventh.



The ball flies into left fielder as an Indian base runner dives back into third base. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

This is where the trouble started for Towns County. The Rebels capitalized on a pitching change that occurred during the sixth inning, scoring 5 runs in the seventh to bring up a 9-5 score against the Indians with half an inning left in the game.

Towns County was able to score two more runs in the bottom of the seventh, but lost the game 9-7.

Game two featured a little more fortune for the Indians. The game remained scoreless until the sixth inning, when Fannin County was able to bring a man home.

Down 1-0 in the bottom of the sixth, Cruz Shook hit the first pitch he saw up the middle for a single, followed by a walk for Sewell and a beautiful bunt laid down by Boone Moss to load the bases with no outs.

Fannin County walked the next Indian up, Denton, to tie the game. The inning ended with a double play followed by a strikeout, and the game was tied 1-1 heading into the final inning.

The Rebels were unable to bring any offense in the top of the seventh, and the Indians took the stage for the game's closing act.

Major Moss took a walk after a full count as the first Towns County at bat, bringing De Vries to the plate.

De Vries knocked a perfect bunt up the left, and the Fannin pitcher charged for it, attempting to throw DeVries out at first.

De Vries made first base by a hair's breadth, all the while Moss was rounding second on his way to third base.

safe. And since Fannin County decided to turn its attention to Moss and his run for third, De Vries figured he would make a dash for second base.

Well, the Rebels were wise to the move, and tried throwing him out at second. Fortunately, De Vries stopped on a dime and turned around, headed back to first.

Fannin County threw to first to try to tag De Vries out on his way back, but De Vries turned tail again, on his way back to second, and was caught in the middle as the first and second basemen closed in.

But the Rebels forgot one thing – Moss was on third base.

With their attention turned to De Vries, Moss headed home to score the winning run of the game.

Zachary Davenport pitched 5 1/2 innings to hold the Rebels to 1 run, with Adam Barrett coming in for the close.

The JV team also won a game and lost a game on Saturday, both played away.

The Indians lost 8-5 against Rabun Gap. They had three hits, nine walks and 11 strikeouts, split between Dalton Key, who pitched for four innings, and Isaiah Shook, who pitched until the end of the game.

Game two featured more Indian at bats, as Towns County defeated Tallulah Falls 6-4 with 14 hits, no walks, eight strikeouts and five errors.

Most of Tallulah Falls' runs were scored on the errors.

Brody Graper pitched well for six innings, with Curtis Swanson pitching the seventh, according to Coach Josh Rider.

TCMS baseball takes care of business, 14-3 at Riverside Military

By Shawn Jarrard
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Gainesville - Towns County Middle School Indians won a big game in Riverside Military Academy territory, defeating the Eagles 14-3 on Monday, March 2.

"We looked like a whole new team," said Head Coach Shea Taylor. "Pitching was stellar. It was a great performance by Trent Bradshaw."

Bradshaw pitched nine strikeouts, helping the Indians to maintain the defensive edge they needed to keep the Eagles' score down.

"It was defensively sound," said Coach Taylor. "We didn't make any errors – it was a good game for us. Bradshaw had a perfect game going until the fourth inning, then he ended up giving up a hit in the fourth, and he walked a few in the fifth inning."

Walker Winn pitched relief in the fifth inning to close the game. With the bases loaded and one out, Riverside hit into a double play to end the game.

Bradshaw also had two runs, two RBIs, while Brett Denton lead the offense, reaching base four times on two walks and two hits. He also had two RBIs and three stolen bases.

Cooper Moss and Hunter Moss each had two RBIs, and Devin Burrell had two hits and an RBI.

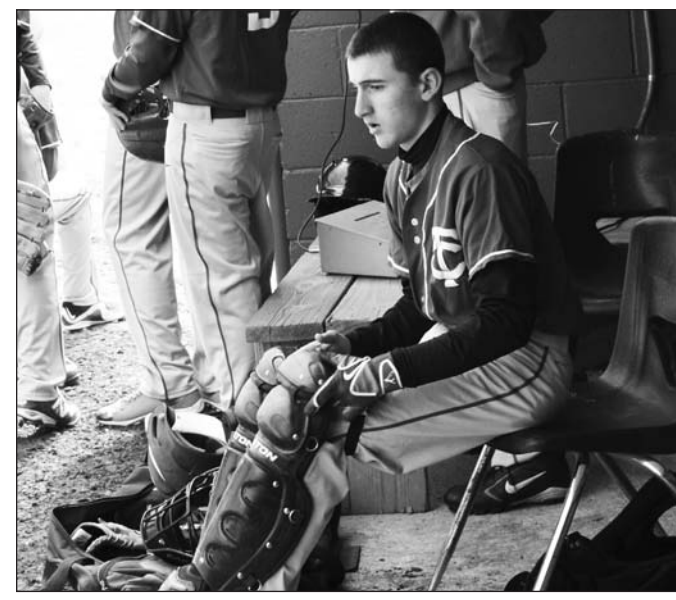
"The kids were pretty selective," said Coach Taylor, as the Eagles walked many an Indian that day. "We had a lot of kids driving runs in, sacrifice plays."

Seth Fullerton fielded the game ending 6-4-3 double play, and Bradshaw made a terrific grab at first base to end the game.

"Defensively, everybody on the team played great," said Coach Taylor. "We didn't make any errors, and Bradshaw having the nine strikeouts was huge, especially in a middle school game. That's a lot of strikeouts for an eighth-grader."

Because of the weather, this game was the first the Indians were able to play since the doubleheader on Valentine's Day.

"We hadn't played in over two weeks," said Coach



Towns County middle school baseball in action during a home game earlier in the season. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

Taylor. "It's been very hard to get practices in as well. We actually didn't practice at all last week except I think one day that we got to practice last week. And then we got on a bus Monday and ended up playing great."

One morale boost for the Indians Monday was hot bats, right from the start.

"Coming in and scoring three runs in the first inning of that game helped a lot," said Coach Taylor. "And Trent struck out the first three batters, and we came right back in hitting again. We scored three or four more runs in the second inning."

Momentum like that allows for the defense to stay rested for the later innings.

"And you're back in there ready to hit again – it gave us an extra boost of confidence," said Coach Taylor.

The Indians' next couple of matchups are on the

road against Tallulah Falls on Thursday, March 12, and again on Saturday, March 14, when they face George Walton.

"We still have to get better," said Coach Taylor. "We still have to hit the ball a little better. We hit into several plays where we got greedy and we weren't very selective toward the end, swinging at pitches we shouldn't have swung at just trying to make things happen. So, still offensively we need some improvement."

"We made some changes defensively, and they're showing to be good changes. I replaced several kids in the infield, and brought a couple of kids into the lineup, and they're playing in the outfield. They're helping us out, too, so I think that making some changes in the lineup did help us. But we've still got to get better both sides of it – defensively and offensively."