

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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## Up and down week for Indians baseball

By Shawn Jarrard  
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The Towns County Indian varsity baseball team played a handful of games last week, two of which were flipped from home to away and vice versa because of poor weather conditions.

Against Athens Academy at home, the Indians won 6-2 in an overall impressive display of offense and defense.

"We got a great pitching performance from Adam Barrett, a sophomore," said Head Coach Shannon Floyd. "Boone Moss came in to close the game out. We played almost flawless defense. When you get good pitching and you play good defense behind your pitcher, you stand a good chance of winning the ballgame. We put some runs on the board early, and it held up."

In fact, the Indians put four runs on the board in the first inning against Athens Academy's starting pitcher.

"We had just hit after hit after hit," said Coach Floyd. "We may have had five or six hits in the first inning. Then, their pitcher settled down a little bit and threw the ball well. We had baserunners in almost every inning, and I think we tacked on a couple more late, a couple of big, timely hits."

"But it was all about pitching and defense that day. Adam did a super job with it. He threw a lot of strikes, and when they did put it in play, the defense had his back. That makes you feel good when you're a pitcher, you're not afraid to throw strikes if you think your defense is going to make the plays behind you."

Despite the game switching from being an away game to a home game due to weather conditions, plenty of fans turned out to support the home team.

On Thursday, Sept. 19, the Indians fell 14-6 against Prince Avenue Christian.

"We ran into a hot team that hit the ball extremely well," said Coach Floyd. "We made a couple of mistakes that cost us a few runs, but that's not why we lost. They hit the baseball. They hit mistake pitches hard, and when we made great pitches, they found holes, blooped in here, bloop there, and they



Senior Cruz Shook rounds third base. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Boone Moss and solid defense from the infield. The Indians scored first that game, but Prince Avenue struck right back in the bottom of the inning, scoring three runs. When Towns County scored again in the second inning to bring the score closer, Prince Avenue scored three more runs to finish the inning.

"They scored in every inning that we played," said Coach Floyd. "But we held on and played seven. We didn't get run-ruled, and we'll take a positive. We hit the ball very well, just didn't come up with the big hit that we needed. We had the bases loaded three different innings, and only got two runs in each inning. We should have capitalized and scored a few more, but that's baseball. It happens that way."

The boys in blue returned home Friday to face off once more against Prince Avenue Christian. The ball field at the high school was too wet for the game, so the Indians played on Zell B. Miller Field at Young Harris College.

Towns County gave a promising performance to start the game, sending Prince Avenue batters back to the bench nearly as fast as they arrived at the plate — three up and three down thanks to the steady pitching of

Boone Moss and solid defense from the infield.

In the bottom of the first inning, the Indians became the first to hit the scorecards, as Major Moss singled as the leadoff batter, then headed home on an RBI single from Cruz Shook.

Prince Avenue Academy answered right back in the second inning, scoring 2 runs to take the lead.

The Indians tied it up, however, when in the bottom of the third, Jackson Taylor hit an RBI single, bringing Will De Vries to the plate after he'd walked to get on base.

Prince Avenue would go on to score 4 runs in the fifth inning and 8 runs in the seventh.

As Towns County faced a 14-2 deficit heading into the bottom of the last inning in the game, they tried to rally and nearly succeeded.

Prince Avenue's pitching had gotten a little shaky after Kobe Denton hit an infield single, and Denton ended up going home on a bases-loaded walk of Jackson Taylor.

And the inning came to a close after that walk, as the last three Indians to the plate struck out, ending the game 14-3.

Hitting was nearly even at eight Towns County hits to Prince Avenue's nine.

## Jenkins second at Georgia Peach Tourney

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Congratulations to Towns County Indian golfer Kenzie Jenkins, who placed second out of 23 lady golfers in the Georgia Peach Golf Tournament at Hard Labor Creek State Park in Rutledge over the weekend.

She and her fellow Indians have been performing extremely well on the green of late, as the Towns County Indian golf teams have come out on top in their most recent matches versus Commerce and Hayesville.

Against Commerce at Double Oaks, the boys' team pulled away with a one-stroke victory, while the girls team defeated its opponents handily.

"That was really great," said Head Coach Brett Keller. "Great for our kids' confidence. We went over there and won by one stroke, the boys did. And Commerce, it's a big area win for us, a region win."

This year, Commerce will be hosting the Area and State Tournaments, and with both the girls and boys teams victorious on the Double Oaks course, they've gained valuable experience that will surely carry forward into those competitions.

"We've got to go back over there and we've got to represent our school well and play," said Coach Keller. "That's when it really, really counts, because we want to do as well as expected. And there, we've got to play our best match then. Not to put any pressure on the kids, but that's when we need to play our best, because if you win your area, you get automatically in the State Tournament."

Golf is one of those sports where performance throughout the season is important, but the emphasis is on improving elements of individual play to help with the aggregate team score, regardless of win/loss records in regular season play, in order to win big at the Area Tournament, Sectional Tournament and State Tournament.

Brasstown Valley will host the Men's Sectional Tournament this year, which is where second, third and fourth place teams in each Area competition will face off to secure a spot in the State



Towns County's Kenzie Jenkins after placing second in Rutledge Tournament.

"Our chances are good," said Coach Keller. "The biggest thing on golf is here, in between the ears. And by going to Double Oaks, that doesn't mean we've won it by any means, but it gives us a confidence booster mentally that we went over to their place and got a win by a stroke. That helps our confidence, saying that, hey, we're in this thing."

"If we just practice the way we were supposed to, apply ourselves individually and as a team, we can pull together and play one that really counts. And it counts every time we're out there. Every chip you make, put you're practicing and matches that we play, we take pride in that."

Double Oaks is a friendlier course than Brasstown Valley, which gives Indians an edge in the competition.

"Playing at Brasstown challenges us to play better at easier courses," said Coach Keller. "It's gotten us better when we go to easier courses because Brasstown is a very challenging course. It's fairly tight, it's huge greens. We're very fortunate that we're able to practice there and get that experience."

Mia Manto and Kenzie Jenkins played phenomenal golf against Commerce on the 16th.

Manto shot a 42 and Jenkins shot a 46. Danielle Diehl did well, too, but only the two lowest scores count toward the girls' team's total score.

"Danielle is just getting the rust knocked off, and she's going to be in the mix, too, and we need her," said Coach Keller. Danielle has missed a match or two this season due to scheduling conflicts with other school activities, but she's getting back into the swing of things.

And on March 18, the boys' team played against Hayesville, winning by three strokes. The girls' team didn't play that day, as North Carolina breaks girls and boys tennis apart — the girls play in the fall.

"We want to get better every match we go out, and our goal is to improve our score and drop our score as individuals so we're dropping as a team," said Coach Keller. "And what we do after the match is over, we look where we lost strokes, and we make sure that at our next practice that we hold, we work on the things that we lost our strokes at so we can improve those areas."

The Towns County Indians' next match will be the Tri-County Cup against Union County and Hayesville at Chatuge on March 25.

## Towns County, along with other local schools wrap up basketball season

By Jerry Kendall  
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Staff Writer

The high school basketball state tournaments are complete as of last Saturday in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama, with teams from all of these states having been opponents of the Lady Indians, Indians, or both, or participated in the Battle of the States Tournament. We will take a look at some of the post season activity of these teams and provide a few comments and observations about the Lady Indians and Indians seasons included in the following paragraphs.

### CLASS A GEORGIA TEAMS IN STATE TOURNAMENT

Just one girls and one boys team from Region 8A made it past the first round in state tournament play this year. The Commerce girls defeated Montgomery County 56-38 in the first round of the Class A Public tournament but were hit with a most unfortunate injury less than a minute into their second round game against Terrell County. The Region 8A Player of the Year, freshman Mya Jones, went down with an injury and would not return except for a few seconds in the fourth quarter.

Those who saw the two games between the Lady Indians and Commerce know first hand the impact Jones had on her team as she scored 34 points in a 64-49 win over the Lady Indians in Commerce and 26 more in the Lady Indians' best performance of the year, a home court 67-58 victory over the Lady Tigers. With Jones missing in the state tournament game, Terrell County took a 45-31 win over the Lady Tigers and a trip to the State Final Four with Taylor County taking 59-43 win over Terrell and then a 67-54 win over Turner County for the Class A Public State Championship.

The Athens Christian boys defeated TCHS opponent Mt. Pisgah Christian of Johns Creek 91-48 in the first round of the Class A Private State Tournament and then Landmark Christian 73-46 in the second round before falling 57-56 to Greenforest Christian, the state runner-up by virtue of a 96-81 loss to St. Francis in the state championship game.

All other Class A TCHS opponents, in addition to the Mt. Pisgah boys, took it on the chin in their opening games, largely to the handful of private schools that load up with metro talent and continue to make a mockery of fair play against other private schools which



The Lady Indians in action vs George Walton Academy, who reached the Private School State Tournament. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

largely follow a pattern of using the students who attend their schools for reasons other than powerful athletics programs.

TCHS girls opponents who were one sided victims in Class A Private State Tournament play were Mt. Pisgah, a 57-30 loser at St. Francis of Alpharetta, and George Walton Academy, a 49-25 home court loser to Southwest Atlanta Christian. St. Francis and Southwest Atlanta went on to easily win their second and third round games in reaching the state championship game where St. Francis took a 47-45 win.

The Lakeview Academy girls had to travel to Calvary Day in Savannah where they lost a very competitive 51-43 game, with Calvary Day then defeating Savannah Country Day 53-37 but falling hard to Southwest Atlanta 77-50 in the semi-finals.

In boys play, three excellent private school teams with excellent records from Region 8A saw their seasons come to an end in the first round of the state tournament. Eventual State Class A private champion St. Francis overwhelmed Lakeview Academy 103-59 and Whitefield Academy buried Hebron Christian 68-36 with Whitefield, usually one of the all star teams, being overrun themselves 63-40 by St. Francis in the semi-final round.

The Providence Christian boys lost a competitive first round game to Stratford Academy of Macon by a score of 95-80 but it was just a matter of time, the next round to be exact, when Stratford would fall 66-23 to Greenforest, the eventual Class A Private runner-up after a 96-81 loss to St. Francis in the title game.

The yearly success of the Southwest Atlanta Christian girls and the Greenforest Christian

boys provides an example of the irrelevance of using enrollment figures in placing these power schools in Class A and this could apply to several other schools with small enrollments but size and talent levels for basketball, and other sports as well, often far exceeding that of much larger schools. Southwest Atlanta shows 44 students and Greenforest 61 for use in determining their assignment to Class A for the 2015 and 2016 seasons.

### OTHER GEORGIA OPPONENTS IN STATE TOURNAMENT

The Union County Lady Panthers and Panthers, TCHS opponents in regular season play and participants in the Battle of the States Tournament, fell in close games to schools from Northwest Georgia in the first round of the Class AA State Tournament. The Lady Panthers, who lost a heart breaker in their Region 8AA championship game 41-39, on a desperation Rabun County trey from near mid court at the buzzer, finished second in their region and hosted the Darlington School, a private school from Rome and a former Lady Indians state tournament opponent.

The Lady Panthers lost a 68-64 decision to Darlington who then lost at Pelham in deep south Georgia 69-60. Pelham then defeated Manchester by a 70-44 score before falling in the state semi-finals by a 78-70 score to then undefeated Holy Innocents, another former Lady Indians state tournament opponent. Holy Innocents had defeated perennial state champion Wesleyan three times by increasingly smaller margins and then fell 45-31 to Wesleyan in the state championship game.

The Union Panthers lost a tough 68-62 decision at Coosa in the opening round with Coosa falling in the second round by a 71-58

to Vidalia with Vidalia making it to the state semi-finals where they lost by just a 59-56 score to soon to be Class AA state champion Seminole County. As an impressive side note, the Rabun County Wildcats defeated Darlington at home 83-69 in the first round, earning a trip from the northeast corner of the state to the southwest corner to face Seminole County. The Wildcats trailed by just a 35-34 score at intermission and 59-54 after three quarters before Seminole pulled away the last quarter for an 83-66 win on the way to their state championship victory.

The Class AAA Banks County girls and boys both extended their records to 24-5 with wins in first round state tournament action before falling on the road in the second round. The Lady Leopards traveled to Beach High School in Savannah where Beach pulled away from just a 33-29 lead after three quarters for a 57-42 win and made it all the way to the state championship game where they fell to Laney High School of Augusta by just a 70-65 score. The Banks boys took it on the chin by an 80-40 score at Rutland High School in Macon in their second round game with Rutland making it to the state semi-finals where they fell by a 77-74 score to Jenkins of Savannah who won the Class AAA state championship.

The Dade County girls had a fight for their lives against the Lady Indians in the Towns County Gym in mid December with the first, second, and third quarters being played on even terms but Dade using a decisive 15-6 advantage in the third quarter in taking a 53-44 win after taking a very comfortable victory some three weeks earlier in Trenton. The Lady Wolverines, as the fourth place team from Region 7AA, would surprise Region 8AA

Champion Rabun County in Tiger, leading at every quarter break in taking a 61-51 victory. Dade would then travel from the northwest corner of the state to Brooks County near the Florida state line where they fell by a 58-52 score with Brooks then falling hard to eventual state champion Wesleyan by a 71-36 score.

Two quality Indian opponents just missing the state tournament were Class AAAA White County, an overtime loser to the Indians, and Class AA Dade County, who won a home court overtime decision and had to rally from a ten point third quarter deficit to pull away for a victory in the final three and a half minutes of the game in Hiwassee.

White County missed by one game making the tournament when the Warriors let a 47-37 lead after three quarters get away in a 68-63 loss to Monroe Area with Monroe winning one game in their state tournament before losing a competitive game to state final four team Cairo. Dade County just missed a state tournament appearance by falling 85-79 to Darlington.

### OUT OF STATE TEAMS IN STATE TOURNAMENTS

Out of state teams participating in the Battle of the States making it to state included the tournament champion Hayesville girls and boys and the girls and boys teams from Hokes Bluff and Piedmont, Alabama. Neither of the Polk County, Tennessee, teams made it to their state tournament.

The Smoky Mountain Conference champion Hayesville girls and boys won multiple games in their state tournament. The Hayesville girls took decisive victories in their first two state tournament games, including by a 64-41 score in Hayesville over Bishop

McGuinness of Kernersville, who saw a run of nine straight North Carolina Class A State Championships since being admitted to the formerly all public North Carolina High School Association come to an end. Smoky Mountain Conference teams had won ten state championships in some twenty nine years through the 2005 season prior to the decision, now seen as ill advised by many, of letting the private schools compete with the small community schools.

With the win over Bishop McGuinness, the Hayesville girls came face to face with Winston Salem Prep, a public school but allowing students to apply for and attend the school from anywhere in Winston Salem and setting up a metro all star team scenario it seems clear they have exploited. At any rate, Winston Salem Prep broke out to a big early lead and held off a strong last half Hayesville rally for a 73-61 win over the Lady Jackets but they weren't through abusing the small Western North Carolina communities. They took a 52-39 win over Hiwassee Dam and dominated Cherokee 62-34 in winning the Western North Carolina side of the state tournament bracket.

Winston Salem Prep then led 46-20 after three quarters in defeating Riverside of Williamston, the Eastern North Carolina champion by a 58-31 score in winning the state championship in the Dean Dome in Chapel Hill. The loss for Hiwassee Dam ended a twenty six game winning streak and Riverside's loss ended an eighteen game winning streak. It's doubtful that the officials in Cherokee, Hayesville, Hiwassee Dam, and Riverside had a situation in mind when joining the North Carolina High School Association decades ago that they would face schools other than similar size community schools, not metro all star teams.

The Hayesville boys also took decisive victories in the first two rounds of the North Carolina Class A State tournament before falling in a third round defensive battle 48-44 to Avery County. It was Avery County's seventeenth straight win without a loss since the first of 2015 with Avery seeing its winning streak come to an end by a 58-43 score in the fourth round to guess who, Winston Salem Prep, the eventual state runner-up.

Well, this wraps up the 2015 high school basketball season coverage with best wishes extended to all of the Lady Indians and Indians for the future.