

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Special Olympics athletes shine during Towns-Union Spring Games

"Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

By Michelle Pyrluk
Towns County Herald
Sports Special

Thursday, May 8th was a wonderful day for the Towns-Union Spring Special Olympics, held at the Towns County High School track and field.

Thank you to all the parents and community members who came out to support us. Parents & students of all age levels from both Towns and Union Schools had a day that they will long remember.

The support from Towns County Elementary, Middle, and High Schools was enormous. Students from all three schools rallied around their peers to cheer them on and support them along the way.

My thanks go out to Amy Gibby Rosser, Erin Schuette, Tonia Weaver, and Becky Tracy as they have served on the Special Olympics committee that meets in Young Harris monthly to collaborate with Union County for as long as I can remember. That is where the organization of the event comes together. They make sure the forms are completed, physicals are up to date, and students are listed for their chosen events among many other things.

We appreciate Jeff, Britany, Katie, and Sara Scott for helping us remember Lisa Scott, a long time para-professional in the special education department, at the event that she loved the most. All Towns County shirts were donated by the Scott family in loving memory of Lisa Scott. Lisa's 11 month old grandson, Bryer, was there to watch the events and seemed to enjoy the atmosphere.

The Blue Ridge Mountain EMC has been gracious enough to loan us their tent(s) now for years. We loved the extra large replacement tent they provided as their others were destroyed in the wind. Thanks to Jason Holdaway and the students who helped him with the set-up and take down of this tent. The shade is much appreciated during the hottest time



The Towns County representatives at Spring Games. Special Olympics photos by Lowell Nicholson



The Games' Emcee Rodney Anderson (right) is an inspiration to all.



The Special Olympics are very dear to Coach Jeannie Ledford (left).



Avita and its clients and staff at the Towns-Union Special Olympics Spring games. Photo/submitted

of the day. McConnell Memorial Baptist Church provided an excellent lunch as well as drinks to the thirsty athletes during and after the events. Many people volunteered from the church to make this an excellent meal for the athletes, their parents, and the staff.

Rodney Anderson did an outstanding job as the announcer. Mr. Anderson is a local hero, a paralyzed veteran who has competed in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and was selected for the World Games in 1999 as part of Team USA. He traveled to New Zealand and won a gold

medal in javelin and two silver medals for shot put and discus. He made the 2000 Paralympics team and traveled to Sydney, Australia, to compete. He is a competitive hunter & fisher, ranking in the top 10 for the 2010 PVA Bass Tour. He has actually completed a "Grand Slam" in turkey hunting which means you must harvest one of each subspecies of turkeys: Osceola, Eastern, Rio Grande, and Merriam's. He served a source of inspiration to all the athletes that he came to know that day.

The athletes were entertained before the events began by Jimmy the clown! He had every-

one laughing all the way to their event. We appreciate Jimmy taking time out of his busy schedule to come by. We could tell that he truly loves what he does.

Dr. King and the robotics club brought out some fascinating robots built by Towns County students. Mrs. Main and the LEO club have been volunteering to help with this event for several years now and once again provided a booth for entertainment. Mrs. Vardo and the HOSA club made personalized glittery posters for each athlete. All the kids got to take them home after the event. Each athlete took theirs as a sou-

venir. 21st Century made a very pretty Olympics themed banner.

There aren't enough words to say what Jeannie Ledford accomplishes for Special Olympics each year. She not only coordinates all the athletic events, but she also coordinates the Battle Buddies. They become friends and partners with our athletes throughout the events.

Thank you to Mrs. Bridges & Mrs. Berrong's BETA club and to Jeff Stowers & crew for the beautiful paper flames & crowns. No child left theirs behind. Thank you to Mr. Perren, Pat & Cody for taking care of all of our needs

with the sound system, tables, chairs, etc. We appreciate the many tables & chairs that you brought out for the comfort of the athletes and families. Thanks to all of the student helpers.

So many people baked for us and brought desserts that were delicious: Julie Wilson, Rachel Queen, Melissa McConnell, Heather Moss, Erica Chastain, Lisa Cole, Kathleen Chiri, Amanda Woodward, Rachel Pietz, and Christie Melton.

Thank you to all the teachers & para's who brought your students and helped them have a great time.

NASCAR 2014

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Gordon outlasts Harvick at Kansas

Jeff Gordon showed he can still get the job done, as he held off a hard charging Kevin Harvick to win Saturday night's Cup race by less than two-car-lengths.

"Kevin was extremely fast," said Gordon. "I got a little loose there at the end and I knew it was going to be close. We had a fast car, but the key to our win was the fast pit stops, and how we were able to get out ahead of him as we cycled through our last stop."

Polesitter, Kevin Harvick dominated early, but found himself stuck in the middle of the field about midway of the race. He struggled with an ill-handling car that hampered his ability to return to the form he showed early in the race. His team continued to make chassis adjustments, which helped him get back to the front. On lap 208 Harvick reclaimed the race lead, but he had to make one last stop for fuel.

He struggled on pit road, and was unable to make up the ground he lost and had to settle for second when the checkered flag waved.

"What put us in second is, I didn't get down pit road very good there coming to the pit box," Harvick said. "I kind of ran out of gas, and I was paying attention to the fuel pressure gauge instead of the pit road speed light. I lost some time there, but I was able to find a groove that worked really well near the end. I slipped with about eight or nine laps to go. I was able to make the ground back up, but not get by Jeff."

Kasey Kahne, Joey Logano, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Carl Edwards, Danica Patrick, Aric Almirola, Jimmie Johnson and Matt Kenseth were the remaining top-10.

Top-16 Chase leaders after 11 of 36: 1. Gordon-394, 2. Kenseth-379, 3. Kyle Busch-373, 4. Earnhardt-368, 5. Edwards-367, 6. Logano-346, 7. Johnson-340, 8. Newman-332, 9. Biffle-328, 10. Vickers-327, 11. Keselowski-326, 12. Hamlin-318, 13. Larson-312, 14. A. Dillon-306, 15. Harvick-302, 16. Kahne-294.

Gordon became the ninth driver to win a Cup race this season. It was his 89th career victory. He is third behind Richard Petty (200) and David Pearson (105) on the Sprint Cup all-time win list.

of his first Cup victory, which came in 1994 at Charlotte in the Coca-Cola 600.

"Yeah, that was just a very special moment to relive," Gordon said. "Such a great moment in my career. Hard to believe it's 20 years ago. But what an amazing day to go to Charlotte in the 600, such a tough race, compete against the best guys.

"Rusty Wallace was certainly very strong that day and the car to beat. Then Ray Evernham made a great two-tire call. We had a fast race car, but that two-tire call made the difference.

"To see the emotions that I went through because it meant so much. Twenty years, wow, it's hard to believe, but it's been amazing.

"I know that time is running short. I can't say I'm sitting here concerned about it. I've had an amazing career. I've accomplished more than I ever thought that I would. This year my focus is on what a great race car and race team that we have.

"I think it's just part of my personality or maybe part of a race car driver's personality that I don't look too far ahead. I worry about the things that I can control. Right now the things I can control is that race car on the weekends, working as hard as I can with the team to get the best results.

"We're off to a great start. Right now I'm healthy. I'm in good shape. I'm having a lot of fun. We're very competitive out there. That's taking all of my attention. Besides the time I spend with my family, that's where my focus is."

"ROWDY" KYLE RUNS AWAY AT KANSAS

Kyle Busch completely dominated Friday night's Truck Series race at Kansas Speedway. He led 8 times for 104-laps in the 167-lap race.

The victory was the second of the season in a truck for Busch. It was his 37th in the series and it came by 3.021 seconds over second-place Matt Crafton.

The win helped ease the pain of four DNF's that he has experienced in the Cup Series at Kansas.

"It was a really good race for us," said Busch. "We unloaded fast, just made some slight changes to it, and played around with some things trying to make it better in practice." Matt Crafton finished



Jeff Gordon wins at Kansas Furnished by GM second.

"He had a very, very fast truck," Crafton said.

"We were just a little bit scared. We wanted to make another track bar change, but I was afraid to make any more adjustments, because it might hurt more than help."

Joey Logano was third, followed by Austin Dillon, Taylor Malsam, Jeb Burton, German Quiroga, Ron Hornaday, Joe Nemechek, and Mason Mingus.

Top-10 leaders after 3 of 22: 1. Crafton-120, 2. Peters-112, 3. Hornaday-112, 4. Quiroga-109, 5. Sauter-105, 6. R. Blaney-101, 7. J. Burton-98, 8. Kennedy-96, 9. D. Wallace-90, 10. Townley-87.

EDWARDS AND BIFFLE CONTRACTS UP IN AIR

The 2014 NASCAR season isn't half over, and already there is talk about driver contracts.

Two of the drivers, whose contracts will expire at the end of this season are Carl Edwards and Greg Biffle. Both drive Roush Fenway Racing Fords.

Last week at Kansas, Biffle talked to the media about his on-going negotiations, while Edwards maintained a wall of silence.

"You guys know that I don't like to talk about that stuff in the media," said Edwards. "To me, that is business and I have made the mistake of letting that turn into a big media thing before so I would rather not talk

about that and keep that between me and Jack (Roush) and Steve Newmark."

Biffle was more reluctant to discuss his contract, even implying that his contract talks center around the 3M Corporation, the sponsor on his No. 16.

"I am absolutely, 100 percent lined up with where I am," said Biffle. "I enjoy being at Roush Fenway. I love 3M. We have a great relationship and the program works really, really well for 3M ... Plain and simply. There is a bunch of new people trying to get their arms around all of the business.

"They've got a lot of business units inside that '3M' ... which likes having all these sponsors in the garage part of one company.

"I've got options. I know I'm going to be racing. I know I'm going to be driving a car. So I'm not worried about it."

Edwards finished sixth in the Kansas race, while Biffle came in 16th.

Weekend Racing: The Truck and Cup teams will be at the 1.5-mile Charlotte Motor Speedway for two night races, while the Nationwide teams travel to Newton, Iowa (a 7/10ths mile track). The Charlotte Cup race will be a non-points race.

Fri., May 16, Truck Series race 4 of 22; Starting time: 8 pm; TV: FoxSports1.

Sat., May 17, Sprint Cup Series All Star race; Starting time: 7 pm ET; TV: FoxSports1.

Sun., May 18, Nationwide Series race 10 of 33; Starting time: 1:30 pm ET; TV: ESPN.

Racing Trivia Question: What year did Carl Edwards begin his NASCAR career in the Truck series?

Last Week's Question: Who won the first Kansas Cup race, which was in 2001? Answer: Jeff Gordon.

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

Summer baseball camps

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Registration open: 10% discount for early registration (before June 1).

Joe Collins



Tips from the Range

I have heard it said that there is only one swing for every club and I agree with this statement, for the most part. Every swing has consistent fundamentals and is dependent upon certain repeatable motions but every swing is not the same. Each club is unique in its design and function, therefore; the swing involved with each club will be unique.

When striking most iron shots, you will make a divot. A wedge will typically make a longer and deeper divot than a 5-iron. These divot patterns are in direct relation to the length of the club you're using, so the longer the shaft then the shallower the divot. Since this is true, then it stands to reason that there should be little evidence of impact when using a fairway wood. In other words, a fairway wood should simply sweep the ball off of the turf and this is one of the most difficult actions to perform with a golf club. This fact alone is why fairway wood shots demand precision and the swing must be nearly perfect to consistently hit good fairway wood shots.

Proper impact with a fairway wood is totally dependent on solid fundamentals. It is extremely important to have the correct ball position and to maintain your balance throughout the swing. The bottom of the swing arc must coincide with the position of the ball almost perfectly. If the ball is too far forward in the stance then you will hit it thin and end up with what many golfers call a "worm burner". If the ball is too far back in the stance then you will top the shot and the ball won't go very far. So, how do we determine the correct ball position to use when playing a fairway wood shot? I am so glad you asked.

First, take your normal stance and push a short tee into the ground aligned just inside your front foot and in line with the swing path so that the top of said tee is the same height as the turf grass and located at the proper distance next to play a 3-wood shot. Next, place another tee about 8 inches back from the front tee, at the same height, but still in line with your take away path. Now, place another tee 12 inches behind the middle tee again at the same height and on the same line as the other two. Place the head of your 3-wood behind the middle

tee and start taking some practice swings being careful to not hit the tee but simply swing over the top of it to make sure you can maintain your balance. If you can barely brush the top of the tee then your balance is close to being proper. Now comes the more difficult part of finding the exact location to place the ball in your stance.

To find the best ball position, place the head of your 3-wood behind the middle tee and make your normal take away. Make sure you swing the club down the same way as you always do and try to make contact with the forward tee. The spot where the club hits the ground is the exact position your ball needs to be in order to make good contact with a fairway wood on a normal shot or in other words, the spot where the club head impacted the ground is the ball position spot you should use when playing fairway woods. As I stated earlier, your fundamentals need to be solid to make consistent impact with fairway woods. Do not let your head move and make sure you keep your eye on the ball. Impact has to be precise to hit a good shot off the fairway so swing smooth and keep your grip light. Stay away from the ball and always let your arms straighten through impact. Practice is crucial when learning to hit this shot.

Okay, we have now covered the basic swing development aspects and I hope it has been helpful. I would like to start having some fun by helping you with your swing problems. I will need to know if the ball is starting off on the target line and moving one way or another or if the ball is starting off left or right of where you are aiming. Please e-mail me at ngnews@windstream.net with any questions you have. You will be surprised by how common your flaws are among most golfers. I will analyze your issue and discuss it here in "Tips". Go ahead and give it a shot. I bet I can help. Good luck and I will see you on the course!

VFW Golf League news

Bill Kiser is back, the crafty Kiser led his team of Frontz Goring, Gary Nichols and Richard to 10 strokes under for a par 62 for the day. They had an outstanding eagle on hole 17. I am sure we will be seeing more of Kiser's teams this summer. June 3rd we will be playing in Helen, tee time 9 a.m. sharp. Again a reminder all Thursday play starts at 9 a.m. sharp.