

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Lightning strikes down Towns-Hayesville rivalry

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The good news is, legendary *Towns County Herald* Photographer Lowell Nicholson is on the mend; the bad news is, the Towns County Indians' offense and defense are both still a work in progress.

Nicholson took a bad spill en route into the stands prior to the opening kickoff and injured his left knee; the Indians ran into a stingy Hayesville Yellow Jacket team and bruised their pride.

Before Mother Nature stepped into the picture, the Indians were trailing the Yellow Jackets 20-0 with 2:21 left in the first half. That's when a bolt of lightning caught the attention of Indians' Athletic Director Jonathan Gibson. Play was halted per Georgia High School Association rules for 30 minutes.

After several successive lightning strikes and delays, game officials finally called the game.

The game ended with Towns County on the losing end of a 20-0 lightning-shortened game to Hayesville.

"You have to wait 30 minutes for each lightning strike, and there were way too many to count," Gibson said. "High School rules also dictate that games not be played beyond 11:30 p.m. It was in the best interests of the players and the fans, to just call it off, give Hayesville the win and make sure everyone got home safely."

Prior to the lightning strikes, the game was not going in a good direction at all for the Indians.

The Yellow Jackets took a quick lead with a touchdown and field goal about 6 minutes into the first quarter. Hayesville strengthened its lead to 20-0 early in the second quarter, putting up another touchdown and another field goal.

Despite strong efforts by the Towns County defense, Hayesville's offense was aggressive and almost unstoppable.

The Indian offense began to turn up the heat during the second quarter, under the direction of senior quarterback Jackson Noblet. With runs that took the team steadily downfield, providing encouragement, the Indians still were unable to dent the scoreboard.

Indians' Head Football Coach Blair Harrison expressed disappointment at the turn of events.



The Towns County Indians take the field for their 2013 season opener. Photo/Mason Mitcham



Junior tight end Zach Sewell (No. 5) and junior guard Kyle Davis (No. 60) clear the way for senior running back Vonya Baldwin. Photo/Mason Mitcham

"We only played a half, we played a half last week, you know, we've only got four quarters under our belt," he said. "We've got so much to learn about the offense and defense; the more plays we get to run, the better we're going to get."

This is Coach Harrison's first year at the helm of the Indians, but he understands that his team is still in the learning mode of his Wing-T offense.

"I would anticipate us getting better each week," he said. "We've just got to keep trying to do what we do."

Individual athletes are already stepping up in response to the first pressures of the 2013 Football Season. Coach Harrison said.

"Cruz Shook played pretty good at fullback. I think our wings blocked pretty good. I thought Shea Underwood did a great job," Coach Harrison said. "We weren't out there very long."

Coach Harrison emphasized that Friday night's results were a team effort. The improved offensive play in the lightning-shortened second quarter may be attributed to greater team unity as a whole.

"It all works together," he said. "We got a little bit more confidence in the second quarter."

Building a winning team takes time, effort, and persistence, Coach Harrison said.

"I think that we've got a long way to go, but we're going to be able to get better," said Harrison. "We're just going to take it one game at a time. We'll just keep doing what we do, and hopefully it'll come together."

The abrupt end of Friday night's game gave Coach Harrison and the Indians time to reflect on their efforts, strengths and weaknesses, as they refocused and start fresh in preparation for Union

County on Friday, Aug. 30th, at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

Meanwhile, Nicholson, the erstwhile *Herald* photographer, was sporting a black eye and took a few stitches in the left knee after his fall, but, he returned to Frank McClure Stadium to watch the Indians from the sidelines.

"Anyone that knows Lowell knows he loves the Indians, and hates the Yellow Jackets," said *Towns County Herald* Editor Charles Duncan. "He was anxious to get back to the game while he was in the Emergency Room at Chatuge Regional. Once he got out of there, he refused to go home and listen on the radio. He wanted to go back to the stadium and see the Indians in person."

Nicholson will return to the sidelines on Friday night as the Indians take on the Panthers at 7:30 p.m. in Blairsville.

TCMS lets one slip away at South Habersham

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Clarkesville – Close, but, no cigar.

The Towns County Middle School Indians led 8-6 until late in the game at South Habersham, but, a late score by the Rebels sealed their fate.

Thursday was overcast and wet, but the families and fans of Towns County turned out in full support to witness the first game of the young football season.

The game was a close, back-and-forth struggle in the mud and wet grass, which ended with a score of 14-8 in favor of the Rebels.

Although it was obvious that some young athletes were taking the loss hard, Indians' Head Football Coach Chris Vardo remained optimistic.

"They're good kids and they played hard," an emotional Vardo said after the game. "We just need to work on making plays when we need to make plays."

Over the next week, Vardo will work on correcting a few simple miscues his team made, such as understanding the importance of crucial moments, like putting the ball in the end zone when the opportunity arises. "We had some mistakes on a couple plays," he admits. "But we can work on that."

Coach Vardo didn't hold back praise for his players.



TCMS' defense in pursuit at South Habersham. Photo/Heather Poole



Cheerleaders keeping the TCMS fans involved. Photo/Heather Poole

"The effort was there, the intensity was there," he said, adding that although South Habersham pulled out a narrow victory, his Indians didn't quit until the final horn sounded.

He was especially proud of starting quarterback Trent Bradshaw, running back Cole

ing up front," Coach Vardo added. "It was a good, solid performance."

When asked how he plans to come back from a tough first-game loss, Coach Vardo's reply was immediate.

"We've got to start fast," he said simply, clarifying that "starting fast" isn't a matter of gaining winning momentum, but start fast and keep the momentum.

He's aware that each competition is different and plans to take it "game by game."

Coach Vardo was proud of the effort given by his athletes.

"We are a team," he said firmly. "We win together, we lose together, and we work hard together; after a loss, you know, you can hang your head or you can pick yourself up."

The Indians will host Rabun County on Thursday in the first home game of the season.

The game against Rabun will be a hard-fought battle, Vardo predicts. He said that the Wildcats have a very good team, and that there won't be room for error.

"We've got to execute," he said.

The game is Thursday at 5:30 p.m.

With a coach as driven as Vardo, and many talented new players, all signs indicate that this will be another exciting season for the Middle School Indians' football team.

Joe Collins



Tips from the Range

We don't always hit the ball to the spots we are aiming, and if the truth were known, we usually on hit a couple of shots a round exactly like we want to. When the shots go astray, and they will for all of us, you need to be able to get the ball back into play and to do that we need to be able to hit several different types of shots. Shots from the rough or bad places are called recovery shots and we all need to learn how to hit these type shots in order to put the ball back in the short grass. This aspect is very important in managing our overall game.

Recovery shots can be from anywhere. Typically, they're shots from less desirable places on the course like sand traps, roughs, and hazards, and yes, even around the green.

There are many places around the green that can be almost impossible to get close to the pin from, and these are just as bad as being in the woods in some circumstances. If you have a tight pin in the back of a green that is sloped toward you on your approach shot and you hit it long, you're dead. Just keeping the ball on the green in this scenario would probably be a miracle, so that stroke cost just as much as a drop from a hazard.

Let me draw your attention to a very important point. IT IS BEST TO AVOID RECOVERY SHOTS!!!

Manage your game and try to control your misses better so you can hit the ball to places on the course that are easier to play from. That is the most affective way of scoring better. However; if you're going to play golf,

it is inevitable that you will find yourself in a bad position. Just try and keep the ball away from the trouble as much as you can. Go for the middle of the green when the flag is on the corners. Those are sucker pin placements. The superintendent will put the hole next to trouble and if you try and get close to those pins and miss, it will usually cost you dearly, so stay away from these pins because the price can be to high if you miss the green.

When you find yourself in a bad position around the green and need to get the ball up quick, the "Lob" or a wristy version called the "Flop" are shots crucial to help save strokes. Fortunately these shots can be learned with only some simple technique and some practice, with practice being the most important.

Obviously the clubface has to be open to hit high shots that stop quickly so at address simply open the clubface and then grip the club. Always open the club first and then grip it in the open position. Never grip the club square and then open the face by rotating the arms.

You need the face open all the way through this shot.

To hit these shots, your stance has to be open to the target. You need to be able to swing across the straight line to the target to make the ball get in the air so open up with your feet and your body. The difficult part here is the club path and the fact that you will still swing the arms from the inside, of your open set-up, on the downswing. The open clubface will be facing right of your address position and will "pop" the ball out toward the target even though your stance is left of the target.

You must keep your hands ahead of the club to make this shot respond. Swing the shoulders and not the hands and body to move the club. Leave the weight on the front foot to make the arc of the downswing steeper and to help with balance. Keep the back shoulder moving so the club accelerates through impact. Any slowing down of the club will cause a miss hit so keep it moving. Keep your eye on the ball until it is gone. This will aid in acceleration. Keep the wrist extremely solid and don't let them break. This is an arm swing as much as anything. Just remember to move the arms with the shoulders.

This is how you hit a lob shot to a high green. The art to this shot is to be able to make it land as though it fell out of the air, straight down and soft. This action removes the forward roll of the ball.

The "flop shot" is hit the same way as the "lob shot" except you work on breaking the wrist at the bottom of the arc. The shoulders control this shot too, so don't involve the wrist and hands until the very bottom of the swing. The better you learn to break the wrist at the bottom, the more arc you will get. Watch this shot though cause if you work on it a lot, you will start incorporating your wrist into your full swing and that can be bad.

These shots require practice. They are easy once you learn them and get some confidence in your technique but they go against the grain a little.

I personally enjoy working on these shots cause I like to go for those tight pins when I find myself in some bad spots around the greens.

If you will take some time and get a feel for these type shots, it will give you the confidence to hit better approach shots and after all, getting it close is what matters.

It is important to be able to hit your chips and pitches high when playing the courses in this area so work on these two shots to help you manage your recovery cause we don't always hit the ball to the place we want.

Remember, practice makes perfect so get out there and work on it to enjoy the game more.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

Fish for Food Fishing Tournament

Matthew 25 Food Ministries presents "Fish for Food Fishing Tournament". 60 percent of tournament money goes to feed needy families in our area. The remaining 40 percent will go to tournament prize money. Prize money will be awarded for 1st Place, 2nd Place and 3rd Place and biggest fish. Actual prize amount will depend on number of entries.

Entry fee is \$50 per boat, the tournaments end in October, occurring the second Saturday of each month rotating between Lake Chatuge, Woods Grove Boat Ramp and Lake Nottely, Deaver Road Boat Ramp, from 7 a.m. - 1 p.m. Tournament schedule: September 14 - Lake Chatuge; and October 12 - Lake Nottely. For contact information call David Crisp at 706-897-5347.

Marine Corps League Golf Tournament

The 17th Annual Marine Corps League Golf Tournament will be held at Chatuge Shores Golf Course in Hayesville, NC on Oct. 10th.

need within our communities throughout the year and charities of Union and Towns counties and worthy military charities.

The tournament benefits children, elderly, families and individuals in

For more information please call Bobby Jarrard at 706-896-6084 or Walt Scott at 706-897-9610.

2013 Youth Coed Basketball

The Towns County Recreation Department will begin registration for the Youth Coed Basketball League for children ages 5 thru 7. (Must turn 5 by November 1st of 2013 to be eligible).

on August 24th and run thru Saturday, September 7th.

Boys and girls will be placed together on teams. Teams will have volunteer coaches who will lead, teach and direct their team.

Fee for the program will be \$25 per child (this includes a uniform). You must register your child and volunteer to coach during this period. For more information contact the Recreation Department at (706) 896-2600 Monday thru Friday 9 a.m. till 8 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. till 4 p.m.