

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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## Union County uses 36 unanswered points to en route to 57-14 victory

By Shawn Jarrard  
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The Towns County Varsity Indians had a real chance of winning Friday's game against the Union County Panthers, but missed opportunities and loss of momentum early on led to the 57-14 loss in Frank McClure Stadium.

"We had opportunities early, and we took advantage of one," said Head Coach Billy Barnhart of a Panther fumble recovered by Walker Ross in the second quarter.

That fumble ended up costing the Panthers, as Kobe Denton was able to make it into the Union County end zone, and Shea Underwood brought the point after attempt home, bringing the score to 14-7 with 8:06 left in the quarter.

"Then, right in the next series, we got the ball back again on a fumble," said Coach Barnhart. "And I felt that was the first opportunity we missed. I feel if we would have scored there, we're 14-14. Now, I think we're in the game no matter how tired we are - the momentum's come our way."

And while the Indians never tied it up, they did end up bringing their score to 14 late in the third quarter, when Denton had a 20-yard carry for the goal,



Senior Cruz Shook (10) leads the way for sophomore quarterback Russell Cox (14). Photo/Lowell Nicholson

and the extra point was good. "Our guys played hard all night long," said Coach Barnhart. "I don't take anything away from our guys. They played hard, and I'm proud of them."

With the scoreboard sitting at 57-14 and 11 seconds in the game, Cole Ledford was last to touch the ball, as the clock

ran out just after his kickoff return.

"They wore us down," said Coach Barnhart. "They've got 60 and we've got 28. They're running fresh bodies in, and we've got the same 11 and 12 playing them. It's tough."

Cruz Shook and Denton both returned to play for the first regular season game of the



Sophomore Walker Ross leads a swarm of blue jerseys as they smother a Panther back last Friday evening. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

year after missing last week's scrimmage against Hayesville for health reasons that arose during the first scrimmage of the year versus Rabun Gap.

Denton had to leave the game about halfway through

the second quarter, but thankfully it was only leg cramps, and he returned for second-half play. Coach Barnhart was glad to have the young men back this week.

"They're both hard work-

ers, and I'm proud of both of them and how hard they run the ball," said Coach Barnhart. "We've got to get better up front. We've got to make holes for those guys, because those guys are both good running backs, along with Zach and Cole."

Offensively, the Towns County Indians put up 179 yards total, with 50 rushes for 161 yards, and going three for 11 passing for 18 yards.

Looking at individual players, Cruz Shook had 18 rushes for 90 yards. Denton rushed 12 times, racking up 68 yards and two touchdowns. Zach Sewell made 13 a lucky number with as many rushes for 3 yards. Russell Cox had 4 rushes for 10 yards, and passed three for 10 as quarterback for 18 yards.

On special teams, Cole Ledford returned the ball four times for 73 yards, and Shea Underwood made four punts for a 31-yard average.

Union County moved the ball 481 yards on 48 plays, with 27 rushes for 267 yards, and 13 for 21 passing for 214 yards.

The Indians forced four fumbles and recovered two of them.

"I'm proud of our guys," said Coach Barnhart. "We've just got to learn from this, we've got to learn from the film and just get better and move on."

## TCMS takes down ACS, Lakeview

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Staff Writer

The Towns County Middle School Softball team played several games last week, with convincing wins for both home games at Lowell Nicholson Field.

Last Tuesday, the girls defeated Athens Christian 2-1. In an exciting development, Kennedy Henson left the tying and winning runs stranded on second and third base, ending the game with a strikeout and further cementing her nerves-of-steel reputation.

And the home game against Lakeview the very next day was a game to remember for the entire team. Henson walked the first batter of the game, but the next six she faced all sat down from big, fat Ks.

Teammate Lexi Ledford paired well with catcher Lea Neumyer, as Ledford came in to pitch the third and fourth innings. Ledford saw three up, three down in the third, and solid fieldwork kept the Lakeview Lions tame and off the bases in the fourth and final inning.

The Lady Indians whipped the Lions, scoring three runs in the first inning, four in the second, three in the third, and two in the fourth. Being 12 runs up to Lakeview's gigantic goose egg, the match was called early.



TCMS was able to hold on during a 2-1 win. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Solid hitting, pitching, and defense ruled the day, and not a single Lion reached base on a hit.

"We hit much better today than yesterday," said Head Coach Jessica Berrong, summing Wednesday's game up beautifully and succinctly. "We had good pitching from both Kennedy and Lexi, and we made our plays in the field."

There is one area that

could use improvement, however, in spite of the 12-0 no hitter pitched by two ladies with lightning bolts for arms, each of whom were backed up by a team that made its bats crack with thundering success.

"We need to work on our bunts," said Coach Berrong. "Some of the girls are still uncomfortable with bunting. We would like to add to our batting capabilities."

## Runs hard to come by for Lady Indians

By Shawn Jarrard  
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The Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Softball team went 0-3 in games last week, but the results were closer than the losing streak might suggest.

Rabun County won 4-1 against the Lady Indians at home last Monday at Lowell Nicholson Field, and the young women went on the road for the next game, forgoing the win 7-1 against Athens Christian last Tuesday.

"We played well against Athens Christian," said Head Coach Brandon Rowland. "You take away the three home runs the other team had and we were in that ball game. We pitched well."

Thursday's home attempt started with a broke-down bus and a late Commerce team, and for a minute it looked like the Lady Indians were about to get their easiest win of the season. But the Tigers finally arrived, and the ensuing match-up was a heated contest that ended in a close game.

After a spine-tingling performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" by Lady Indian Alyssa Pyle, playing center field that day, the game was underway.

The Tigers scored in the first inning off a two out, full count, two-run double into center by Lady Tiger Harlee Ingram.

First Lady Indian to bat,



Towns' bats produced only 3 runs last week. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

catcher Tori Morgan, reached base when she took the very first pitch as one for the team in a beanball that sent her walking.

Next up, pitcher Emily Ledford grounded to second and was thrown out at first, allowing Morgan to advance. The crafty catcher then stole third, followed by a sacrifice RBI from Zandra Churchill, bringing Morgan across home plate for the only Lady Indian run that day.

The infield worked beautifully together. First baseman Jordyn Gurley and second baseman Carly Gilfilian made short order of most batters that pitcher Emily Ledford didn't manage to strike out. Ledford had eight strikeouts for the game, and the

Lady Indians almost won it with a 3-1 final score.

"They played well," said Coach Rowland. "We're getting better."

Offensively, the Lady Indians managed to connect with the ball regularly, and even reached base several times Thursday.

"We were hitting the ball, just at the wrong time," said Coach Rowland. "If we just keep hitting, it'll find a hole sooner or later."

Coach Rowland has his heart set on taking the fourth or fifth spot in the region this year. True, the Lady Indians have taken some lumps and losses along the way, but they're still in it to win it.

## Towns County's Termites and Mites win big at Robbinsville

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Staff Writer

Robbinsville, NC - The Towns County Youth Indians fought valiantly atop the gridiron Saturday, but the Black Knights of Robbinsville defended their home turf and, ultimately, their honor.

"They were just a little bit better team Saturday," said Pee Wee Head Coach Shane Haney.

Stout-hearted stood the 5 and 6-year-old Towns County Pee Wees in Robbinsville, North Carolina - they were a long way from home with a long game ahead. The final score reflected a brave battle that ended in a 0-22 loss.

Our Wee ones held Robbinsville scoreless in the first quarter, but the Black Knights were able to advance touchdowns in each successive quarter thereafter.

Cruz Kitchens ran for a 41-yard touchdown, but the referees brought it back because of blocking in the back. It was said of the refs that they were "very happy with the flags," handing the Pee Wees a stunning 10 penalties.

"I've seen a lot of 5 and 6-year-old games in my life, and about every play there's going to be a hold," said Youth Football Director Jimmy Smith. "These are 5 and 6-year-old kids - they threw flags everywhere on us."

But the season is young, as are the Pee Wees themselves, and the little Braves continue to stand tall with a winning record



Photos by Lowell Nicholson

of 2-1.

And the Termites also increased to 2-1, making a courageous crusade despite missing the mark 42-0.

Offensively, the 7 and 8-year-olds struggled to move the ball. Defensive leaders included Jensen Goble with six tackles, with Brett Young taking two more Black Knights to task.

"We thought we had the kids coached up to their level going into that game, but we learned a lot," said Termite Head Coach Joseph Goble. "I don't care to say it, they just outcoached us. That's just the way it is."

According to Director Smith, Goble saw things "that we just haven't worked on enough, and he promised that he's going to get that corrected." Assistant coaches Ricky Moss, Cody Canterbury and

Michael Chastain are 110% committed to helping Coach Goble accomplish that aim.

The saving grace for the Indians Saturday was the Mites, who, much like their younger brothers, increased their record to 2-1 with a 32-16 win over the Black Knight Mites.

"Our quarterback, Kyle Oakes - as long as I've been doing this on 9 and 10-year-old football, I have never seen this," said Director Smith. "And when the game was over, Robbinsville coaches asked where the quarterback was. They found him and told him that they also have never in their lives seen a kid do what he did Saturday."

Oakes somehow managed to complete an astonishing 216 passing yards, leading many to believe that he did in fact have a robotic arm. Others disagreed, thinking that maybe



he had robot legs, as he also ran for 90 yards. Any way you slice it, Oakes was as solid Saturday as his last name suggests.

And that could be said of the entire team. Griffin Young and Will Duncan scored two touchdowns apiece, with #9 Burrell getting a goal of his own.

Defensively, the Indian Mites were a Black Knight nightmare. Oakes tackled seven counterparts, while Tyler Loyd put four Black Knights flat on their backs. Grant Ingram and Duncan both said goodnight to three Knights each.

The Midgets had a bye week, and the coaches spent that time getting the 11 and 12-year-olds ready for the next home game against the Smokey Mountain Mustangs.

Head Coach Rodney Thomas said it was the best practice they've had all year,

and the Midgets look ready to kick some Mustang tail at home come Saturday.

Director Smith would like to thank Preacher Shep Calhoun, who opens every home game with prayer and has done so for the past six or seven years.

And Lisa Walls has done a terrific job directing cheerleading this year.

"The cheerleaders did awesome," said Director Smith. "They worked hard all day, and it was hot - I mean, it was hot. And they stood out there the whole time and worked hard. I'm proud of the cheerleaders showing up and working hard."

After the games, win or lose, the Indian cheerleaders proved that chivalry was alive and well when they shook hands with their opponents in a show of good sportsmanship

that is likely to continue Saturday in the next home game.

"I'd sure like to see people coming out this Saturday to our ball game," said Director Smith. "I think the commissioner, Bill Kendall, he's coming out to the 11 a.m. game, the Pee Wees. He's going to do the coin toss."

Youth football, as it turns out, is a community affair. And if the Black Knights taught the Indians anything, it was how to stand up and face adversity, knowing that other people have their backs regardless of the outcome.

"I hope everyone comes out and supports us like they did the Hayesville game," said Director Jimmy Smith. "We had a lot of support from people coming out and supporting us that game. So, I'm hoping there will be a lot of people who come out for it."