

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Turnovers bite Indians in close loss at Mt. Vernon

By Shawn Jarrard
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Atlanta - The Towns County Indians lost 19-16 in a nail-biter against Mt. Vernon Presbyterian School Saturday.

Contributing to the loss were five turnovers: four fumbles and an interception.

"You can't ever blame a game or a loss on one play, but when you have five turnovers offensively, it's hard to beat anybody when you have that many turnovers," said Head Coach Billy Barnhart.

The first fumble happened deep in Mustang territory, in the Indians first possession of the game. The 13-play drive was hard fought from the Mustang 49-yard line, but ended in a third-and-goal scenario from the 5-yard line when the ball betrayed the blue, only to be recovered in the end zone by Mt. Vernon.

"We came out holding them the first drive defensively," said Coach Barnhart. "We get the ball, we drive it down the field, we're going in to score, and we fumble going into the end zone. I mean, I feel if we score there it's a totally different ball game."

And the Mustangs were able to turn that fumble into a 99-yard scoring drive for a touchdown, totaling about 8 minutes of possession and a point after attempt that was good.

But the Indians had a little something to say about that, as 22 seconds later sophomore Kobe Denton ran in a



The Towns County Indians defense drags a Mt. Vernon ball carrier to the turf. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

touchdown of his own, and the ensuing 2-point return gave the Indians the lead early in the second quarter, 8-7.

The next two Indian drives were ill-fated, however.

After turning the ball over to Towns County on downs, Denton was able to rush from the Mustang 33-yard line down to the 14. But two plays later, the Indians fumbled the ball on the 13-yard line, missing yet another

Red Zone opportunity.

Their very next possession, under pressure from Mustang defenders, sophomore quarterback Russell Cox threw right into enemy hands. Thankfully, the Mustangs couldn't capitalize and had to punt the ball on 4th-and-8 from their own 24-yard line to end the first half.

Going into the second half, the Indians seemed to have the momentum. They were in the lead, and they had



Sophomore quarterback Russell Cox hands off to senior running back Cruz Shook (10). Photo/Lowell Nicholson

successfully stopped the Mustangs from cashing in on two of three big miscues.

But another fumble in their second possession of the third quarter ended in a drive that saw Mt. Vernon sailing in for another touchdown at the start of the fourth quarter.

With only 8 minutes and 50 seconds left in the game, the Indians turned the ball over a final time, and the Mustangs were able to score the touchdown that really mattered in

only 49 seconds.

The Indians rallied with an answering score of their own when, with 4:56 left in the game, freshman Cole Ledford waltzed right into the end zone like he owned it, and the Indians made good on their second 2-point conversion of the day, bringing the scoreboard to Mustangs 19, Indians 16.

After that, Mt. Vernon ran out the clock.

"I felt they played hard in the elements that we were

in," said Coach Barnhart. "It was extremely hot, but both teams were in that, so that's no excuse. But I felt they toughed it out, they fought through, and they played their hearts out. I don't doubt that one bit."

Towns County put up 217 yards in 47 plays Saturday, with 44 rushes for 201 yards, and Cox throwing for 16 passing yards.

Individually on the offense, Denton had 17 rushes for 130 yards, with a touchdown and a 2-point conversion. Ledford rushed 8 times for 16 yards, and had that beautiful touchdown toward the end of the game. Senior Cruz Shook had 50 yards of his own on 14 rushes, and Cox rushed 4 times with the other 2-point conversion.

The Indian defense gave up 267 yards, but junior Daulton Rogers and senior Kyle Davis muscled many a Mustang to the ground or out of bounds.

"I thought we played good across the board," said Coach Barnhart. "I sound like a broken record, but there were just some missed opportunities that we had that we didn't capitalize on, that we didn't take advantage of."

Lakeview Academy is coming up this Friday night at 7:30 at Frank McClure Stadium.

"Right now, we've just got to continue to work on us," said Coach Barnhart. "We'll prepare for Lakeview, but we've got to get better. This week we're going to work on securing the ball more than anything."

Lady Indians fall 12-4 at Providence Christian Academy

By Shawn Jarrard
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Norcross - The Lady Indians lost one on the road to Providence last week 12-4, and their home game against Hart County was cancelled due to weather on Wednesday.

"The offense is getting better," said Head Coach Brandon Rowland. "I did get to work in some of our younger players (against Providence), and they did well for us."

Tori Morgan, Carly Gilfilian and LeAnn Dean cracked some solid hits, but all four runs against Providence were unearned.

"We had a few hard hits, but unlucky for us, it was right at the opposing players," said Coach Rowland. "The offense is still looking up, as we are really beginning to swing the bat well."



Tori Morgan pitched 2 1/3 innings, with three strikeouts and six walks. Emily Ledford took over from there, pitching 1 2/3 innings, with two strikeouts and two walks of her own.

Providence banged out six hits and cranked out 12 runs.

"We played hard but fell short," said Coach Rowland. Despite the loss, the



girls are connecting with the ball more and more each week.

"We can obviously improve on all aspects, but our offense is definitely coming around," said Coach Row-

land. The next game is at home against Prince Avenue on Tuesday at 4:45 p.m., and Coach Rowland knows what they need to work on to give the girls an edge.

"The biggest thing is for us to get all three together: pitching, offense and defense," said Coach Rowland. "When one is going well, we are weak in the other - it's all

Youth football Indians split with Smokey Mountain

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Towns County Indians played hard against the Smokey Mountain Mustangs Saturday, picking up two wins and two losses at home.

"A lot of people came out, and I think they got their money's worth," said Youth Football Director Jimmy Smith. "They saw some good games."

Kicking things off, the Indian Pee Wees horsewhipped the Mustangs in a 20-0 shutout victory. Truth be told, Towns County's 5- and 6-year-olds controlled their Mustang counterparts.

Cruz Kitchens lead the team with 178 rushing yards for three touchdowns, but had plenty of help thanks to blocking by Rylin Shook, Jonah Vargas and the rest of the "big blue wrecking crew."

Mason Mitchell had a huge offensive day, and Lane Haney, Cooper Floyd and Jacob Nicholson played stellar defense. They made some key tackles and recoveries against the Jackson County, NC, team.

Coach Floyd was "very excited about the offense, because 12 of the 14 players got the opportunity to run the football for the first time, and eight of them got positive yardage."

And while the Pee Wees increased their record to 3-1, the Termites fell to 2-2, losing a heartbreaker of a game.



sively. It was an even match of talent and we just came up short," said Head Coach Joseph Goble. "Sometimes in the great game of football you lose when you should have won and vice versa. However, we win with humility and we lose with humility. I'm proud of all our boys - they came together like the true team they are."

The Indian Termites ponied up a pair of fumbles, and the Mustangs took advantage of those opportunities.

Halftime saw a score of 6-6, and with only 2 minutes remaining on the clock, the Mustangs scored the winning touchdown, as the 7- and 8-year-old Termites were unable to answer.

"It was a 12-6 ballgame, two minutes left in the fourth

quarter - it could have gone both ways," said Director Smith. "It was a tough loss."

Towns County's Mites made their Mustang opponents look more like foals, as their record went up to 3-1 in a big 14-12 win. But it was close margin.

"That was a good ballgame, from the kickoff to the end," said Director Smith. "We were up 14-6, and they scored with three seconds left in the game, put them 14-12 with no time left on the clock."

There was only one hope left for the Mustangs - try for a 2-point conversion and force overtime play. And try they did, but the Indian Mites stopped them short at the 2-yard line.

Instead of winning, the Mustangs went home with the loss. The Mites had several big producers on the day. Kyle Oakes had 100 total yards passing and rushing, with one passing touchdown and one rushing touchdown. Oakes also had seven tackles and a fumble recovery. Griffin Young made a touchdown catch worth 50 yards. Tyler Floyd had four tackles and a sack, while Micha Gibson, Grant Ingram and Brack Burrell had three tackles apiece.

"The sad part was, on that play with no seconds left when they went for it, one of Jackson County's kids dislocated his kneecap," said Director Smith. "It was bad. They had to load him on the stretcher - that was awful."

And that was just the start of a series of unfortunate Saturday events.

Indian Midgets had their game postponed 30 minutes due to a lightning storm, and a key player came out in the first half from an injury.

"We lost our tailback, Hayden McClure. He broke his wrist. He was a key player for us," said Director Smith. "That's a loss."

The Midget game is another one to file under heartbreaker, as the team looked better than it has all year. Problems started before the game with the storm, then McClure suffered the broken wrist, and finally, three players came out in the fourth quarter.

"Going into the fourth quarter it was 0-0," said Director Smith. "And then it didn't

help us, we lost all of our running backs. One hurt his shoulder, one hurt his ankle, and the other got his thigh hit hard. So, we had all starting running backs on the bench - we didn't have anybody in there."

So, four players out of the game - of the four, only one injury was serious - and even a Towns County parent ended up passing out in the heat. But could it get any worse? Well, it did.

"We allowed 24 points in the fourth quarter," said Director Smith, and the game ended Mustangs 24-0.

One shining light in the Midget darkness was Elijah Harbin.

"He had 10 solo tackles and was the defensive player of the game for us," said Head Coach Rodney Thomas.

Preacher Shep Calhoun led prayer for the teams as he usually does at home games, and Towns County High School softball player Angel Moss was gracious enough to perform the national anthem for each of the four games Saturday.

Towns County Youth Football hits the road for the next series of games against the Swain County Maroon Devils in North Carolina.

Director Smith acknowledges the toughness of these Devils, but has his heart set on winning - this week and beyond.

"The last game of regular season is Oct. 31," said Director Smith. "Playoffs start after that, and then the Super Bowl is in November. We've got a shot at it."