

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Towns County Youth Football's 6&U and 10&U win in dramatic fashion

By Mason Mitcham
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All three of the Towns County youth football teams played at home on Saturday to mixed results - all against much larger counties.

The 6&U squad won a tense 8-6 match against Dawson County. And the 10&U Indians fought tooth and nail for their 21-20 win against White County.

Meanwhile, the 8&U team lost 26-8 to Habersham County.

The 6&U played first, scoring a touchdown and 2-pt conversion within the first minute. Although young, the athletes are already developing the teamwork necessary to win games.

Brett Young carried 65 yards to set up the touchdown, Dawson Devane scored, and Young ran the conversion.

In the second quarter, the Dawson County Tigers stepped up the aggression. With 7:32 to go in the quarter, Dawson County scored a touchdown, but was unable to break through Towns's defense for the extra point. That round ended with a score of 8-6.

The third quarter could have gone badly for Towns if not for some crucial defensive plays. It was apparent that the aggressive Dawson County offense had their hearts set on scoring. Brett Young was forced to make a couple of touchdown-saving tackles. Though tensions were high, there was no change in the third or the fourth quarters. The score stayed 8-6, Indians.

"They just keep winning," Director Jimmy Smith said. "Great coaching staff. They've done such a great job." The 5-6 year-olds are now 4-1 for the season.

Though they remain undefeated, Towns County's 10&U group escaped with a win after a tense, hotly contested thriller against the White County Warriors, emerging with a 1-pt victory.

The first quarter was a battle that ended with neither team able to score. It was 0-0 going into the second.

Most of the second quarter went the same way. The teams fought back and forth. To those used to dominant performances by the Towns 9-10 year-olds, it was nerve-



Towns County's Youth Football teams take two of three games last Saturday. The Indians picked up victories over Dawson County and White County. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

wracking.

Finally, Peyton Ivester caught a pass for a 60-yd touchdown strike, putting Towns on the board. The extra point brought the score to 7-0.

Not to be outdone, however, White County scored at the buzzer, tying the score 7-7 as the second quarter ended.

Then the Warriors scored again with 7:36 in the third quarter, carrying 35 yards for a touchdown, changing the score to 13-7.

With 5:01 to play in the third, Ivester almost single-handedly turned the game back around for Towns. He ran for a touchdown, tying the score 13-

13. He also ran the conversion. Ivester is not the biggest athlete on the team. But he flattened two defenders and dove over their submissive forms for the extra point, making the score 14-13.

When Towns scored again with a minute left in the third quarter, the game appeared to be decided. The touchdown and extra point brought the score to 21-13 going into the fourth.

However, Towns fumbled late in the fourth quarter, turning over the ball to White County. With 3:16 left in the game, White scored the touchdown and a 1-pt conversion,

bringing the score to 21-20.

Those last three minutes saw a brutal fight between the two teams, but exceptional defense by Garrett and Kyle Oakes insured that White County did not score again.

The game ended with a one-point victory for Towns.

Though they lost, the 7-8 year-olds have made great gains this season.

They were able to hold Habersham County, to a scoreless tie in the first quarter. Jenson Gobel and Braylin Raider made persistent attempts to score, to no avail. In the second quarter, Habersham broke through, scoring two



touchdowns and extra points for a score of 14-0.

Despite the best efforts of the Indian offense, notably Raider's first-down runs, Towns County was unable to score.

Gobel and Raider continued to make runs throughout the third, but couldn't break through the Habersham defense. Habersham scored with 1:19 left in the third, bringing it to 20-0.

With 4:33 to go in the fourth quarter, Habersham scored for the final time, bringing the score to 26-0.

Finally, with 39 seconds to go in the game, Raider scored

for the Indians. With Gobel on the carry, the 2-pt conversion was successful, bringing the final score to 26-8.

Director Smith noted that despite the score, the 7-8 year-old team has improved in the couple of weeks since they last played.

"Our defense, I thought, did a great job this week," he said. "They stepped up. They hit some people today and they actually blocked better today. I still believe we're going to get some wins before the season's over."

Towns County will play again at home this Saturday.

Commerce escapes with 4-0 victory

By Mason Mitcham
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The Towns County varsity softball team played old rivals Commerce on Tuesday. Though the game was hard-fought, the Indians lost 4-0.

Before the players took the field, the announcer took a moment to honor the Towns County 10&U youth softball team. The athletes have gained the title District All-Stars, and they were the state runner-up and fifth in the world series.

Taking the mound, pitcher Emily Ledford wasted no time in striking out Commerce's first few batters.

However, Commerce was able to score a solid hit that sent a runner around the bases for one run.

Although a hit by Kristin Henson put Towns in a position to score at the bottom of the first, Henson was unable to bring it home. Going into the second inning, the score was 1-0 in favor of the visitors.

The second inning passed with no change. At the top of the third, the Lady Tigers scored another RBI single, making it 2-0.

Good defense by Towns, notably Alyssa Pyle and Tori Morgan, prevented Commerce from scoring again until the sixth inning.

In the sixth, the Lady Tigers once again scored off of a good hit that sent the ball through the gaps in the Indian outfield, bringing two runners home and the score to 4-0.

"They hit the ball really well," Coach Jessica Berrong admitted. "They hit the ball where we weren't."

However, Berrong stressed that the loss was not because of defensive mistakes.

"It wasn't like we had many errors," she said. "Our defense has improved. All year, I've been saying that you need



The Towns County Lady Indians look on during their contest with Commerce last week. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

to make some plays you're not supposed to make. And we had players do that today. Defensively, I think we've improved," she continued. "We've just got to hit the ball better."

Georgia High School Association rules state that, as a coach, she can't practice with her team during the off season, until summer.

However, it may be likely that the players themselves, absent the coach, will do what they can to keep from getting rusty, including playing travel ball. With the end of the season

fast approaching, Berrong is already making plans to play with her team as soon as she can.

"After May, we're going to do games again," she said.

Next week, Towns County will face off against Prince Avenue, a team infamous for the speed of its pitcher. Coach Berrong, however, remains confident in her team's ability to prepare during practices.

This last game of the season will be held on Tuesday at home. First pitch is scheduled for 4:45 p.m.

TCMS football season comes to a close

By Mason Mitcham
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Blairsville - For their last game of the season, the Towns County Middle School football team traveled away to play bitter rivals the Union County Panthers.

Off to a fast start, Union scored early in the first with a touchdown and two-point conversion.

They scored again with 3:59 remaining in the first quarter, bringing the score to 15-0 with a touchdown and field goal. Fifteen seconds later, Union scored again, making it 22-0. Despite heroic offense by the Indians, notably Cole Ledford, who had a 25-yrd carry Towns fumbled the ball at the two-minute mark. The ball was recovered by and turned over to Union, who scored with 15 seconds left in the first quarter. That quarter ended 29-0 in favor of Union.

The Indian defense was able to recover some in the second quarter, allowing Union only one goal. The Panthers scored with 5:59 to go, a kick and a field goal bringing the score to 36-0. Towns's offense played aggressively, Andy Chambers, Cole Ledford, and Trent Bradshaw gaining significant yardage.

There was no change in the third quarter.

In the fourth quarter, the persistence of the Towns County offense finally paid off. Andy Chambers took the ball through Union County lines for a touchdown with 22 seconds left in the game. The Indians went for and scored a two point conversion, putting a total of eight points on the board. The game ended 36-8.

Despite the loss, Head Coach Chris Vardo stayed positive.

"The kids played better," he said. "A lot better." He noted that the statistics do not necessarily reflect the game play.



Towns County Middle School football in action at Union County last week. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

"Wins aren't always measured in W's and L's," he said, "but in progress."

Vardo is eager to have his six and seventh graders come back next season, but also happy to have some of his players move up to the high school.

"We have a lot of kids return for next year, and hopefully we've got some good players go up to help the varsity," he said. "Our offensive line except for one guy is returning, so that's good news. The quarterback is one of our sixth graders. So we've got some positive things, and some things we can

definitely build on."

Although Union County will move on to play in the league championships, Towns will not.

The Indian middle school football team has improved notably since the beginning of the season, and Vardo is proud of the huge gains they've made.

"The team you saw in the first game is not the team you saw today," he said. "We've made a lot of progress."

For more photos of TCMS' 2013 football season, see Page 9A