

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Athens Academy plays spoiler at Indians Homecoming

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

The Towns County Indians struggled Friday night, losing their Homecoming game against the Athens Academy Spartans 41-0.

But one thing is for sure – the Indians have been performing consistently better in the second half for the last couple of games.

“We’ve got to figure out how to come out and play in the first half, and I don’t have an answer for it right now,” said Head Coach Billy Barnhart. “I wish I did because we could correct it. Right now, I don’t have an answer why we’re doing that.”

The highlight of the game was when last year’s Homecoming Queen, Ansley Vardeman, crowned Kayla Davis the new Homecoming Queen at halftime. Davis and first runner-up Ashley Abrahamson joined this year’s Homecoming King Alejandro Lemus-Gomez for pictures on the field.

Coach Barnhart and his Indians have been working week in and week out on the fundamentals, blocking and tackling. They’ll continue to keep up the hard work in those areas.

“Defensively, that was the one thing I was really disappointed with tonight was our tackling,” said Coach Barnhart. “And we’ve worked on it over the last couple of weeks. That’s the thing that blows my mind – we’re still trying to arm tackle, we’re still diving at guys’ feet instead of wrapping up



The Towns County defense led by McConnell, Shook, and Davis stepped and running through tackles.”

And while the Indians couldn’t put up a single point against the Spartans Friday, they did hold the enemy to a single touchdown in the second half versus five scores in the first half.

In their last game, Towns County went into the half down 35-0 at George Walton Academy, but held the Bulldogs to two touchdowns, putting up four of their own in the second half. With that game in particular, the first half didn’t make too much sense considering the Indians finished the second half 28-13 in points over George Walton.

But Friday’s Homecoming game wasn’t without little victories. Right off the bat, Athens Academy received the kickoff, then fumbled on a bad snap in the very first drive of the second half. Sophomore Walker Ross picked it up and carried it a couple yards, but the team just couldn’t take it from there.

Shea Underwood blocked the extra point on the final Athens Academy score of the game, as if saying enough was enough.

Cruz Shook, Cole Ledford and Kobe Denton had fairly regular touches, but the team wasn’t able to produce the yardage.



things up in the second half against Athens Academy. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

“That’s something that, as a coaching staff, we’ll take a look at this week and see if we can figure something out,” said Coach Barnhart. “That’s on me, and we’ll try to figure it out and we’ll try to get better in that area. That’s just something we’ve got to continue to work on.”

Defensively, Kevin McConnell, Nick Shook and Kyle Davis really stepped up and delivered, especially in the second half.

“We’ve got to reexamine everything, reexamine what we do maybe pre-game,” said Coach Barnhart. “We’ve done that already, but maybe go back and

reexamine what we’re doing, and see if there’s some way we can get them coming out more ready to play at the beginning of the game than what they are.”

Denton saw a return to play Friday, as he has missed the past three weeks because of an injury on the field. Denton is a noted playmaker, and has taken in quite a few touchdowns for the team this year.

“He did play a little bit more in the second half, but we tried to work him in there sparingly in the first half,” said Coach Barnhart. “But I thought Denton, for being first game back in about

three weeks, I thought he looked good running the ball when he did.”

Coach Barnhart may not have had the answer right then and there at the end of the game Friday, but he certainly had no doubts in this group of Indians.

“We’re going to continue to work on what we’ve been working on every week, we’ve got to get better as a team,” said Coach Barnhart. “And these guys will. Never once have I had to worry about their work ethic. They come out every week to work, but we’re just going to continue to work.”

Lady Indians clobber Providence in finale

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

Towns County’s Lady Indians clobbered Providence Christian Academy 8-0 in a shutout victory Tuesday, Sept. 30, at Lowell Nicholson Field in their last regular season game of 2014.

The day was special for many reasons: it was Senior Night, Head Coach Brandon Rowland’s birthday, Lowell Nicholson Field Dedication Day, plus, the win was a comeback victory for a defeat suffered at the hands of Providence earlier in September, 12-4.

“We were looking for blood this time,” said Head Coach Rowland. “We were hungry for this one.”

Six seniors will be graduating this year, and the school held a special ceremony for them after the game in which they were escorted by their parents onto the field.

Coach Jim Melton announced the girls’ plans following graduation, and Coach Rowland handed each of the girls a gift and a rose.

Departing seniors are: Emily Ledford, Carly Gilfilian, Alyssa Pyle, Morgan Bradley, Kristen Goodwin and Tori Morgan.

“I have enjoyed watching them grow,” said Assistant Coach Shannon Moss. “They have begun, and we are hoping to continue, a winning tradition. We have their dedication and hard



Towns County says farewell to its seniors. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

work to thank for that.”

The Lady Indians finish out the season with an 8-16 overall record, going 5-9 in league play.

Emily Ledford dominated the Providence hitters, striking out six batters in the short five-inning game.

RBIs were supplied by Zandra Churchill with two, Tatiana Baldwin, Bradley, Ledford with two, Gilfilian and Kristen Henson.

“We played well today, exactly the way I wanted to come out here and do,” said Coach Rowland. “Everything came together. My pitching was on, hitting was on, defense, spot on. I got my seniors out here, they were amped before the game, ready to go, and we got a win in five innings for them, so that was

huge for us.”

Coaches Rowland and Moss are extremely proud of how their Lady Indians have performed throughout the season.

“It’s been a blast,” said Coach Rowland. “I told the ladies I was looking for eight wins this season. Before I even came in and saw the team, before I got to know them and everything, I wanted to win eight. That was my goal, and we reached that tonight.”

Following the win and ceremony, the Lady Indians lined up opposite each other on the third base line, touching bats in the air to form a tunnel.

The graduating seniors ran from third to slide home one final time, finishing out a successful season at Lowell Nicholson Field.

Termites save the day; shutout Andrews

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Towns County Youth Football program lost three of four games to the Andrews Wildcats Saturday at Frank McClure Stadium, but the little guys played with as much heart as they have all season.

“We got our tails kicked Saturday, but everybody played hard this week,” said Youth Football Director Jimmy Smith.

The Indian Pee Wees lost a close one at 8-6, dropping their record to a still admirable 6-2.

“Andrews came in only allowing six points all season, and we came in a scored six on them, so that was big,” said Director Smith. “I hope to see my little team in the Cracker Bowl, that’s what I’m hoping to see – I think it’s going to happen.”

Going into Saturday’s match-up, both Towns County and Andrews Pee Wees had winning records of 6-1 and were tied for first in the league. The Indians may have lost to Andrews, but really, it was anyone’s ballgame.

“We beat Cherokee and Cherokee beat Andrews, so it’s just back and forth is what it is,” said Director Smith. “I think when we get to the playoffs, you never know what they’ll do.

The Termites had the only Towns County victory of the day, winning a nail-biter 6-0 to increase their record to 4-4. And with one more game left in regular season play, the Termites have a real shot at walking away with a positive season record.

Suffering a true heartbreaker, Towns County’s Indian Mites lost 32-8 against the Wildcats, bringing their record to 5-3. The loss wasn’t too big of a blow, however, because the Mites still have a chance to secure a spot in the playoffs, and by extension, a chance at the Cracker Bowl.

“The Mites, they still can get in it, but we have to win at Franklin,” said Director Smith.

Probably the biggest win for Towns County Saturday was the hard-fought loss by the Midgets, who didn’t actually win the game, but might as well have for how well they played.

The final score was 52-30, making the Midget record 0-7 for the season. But those 30 points meant the world to those fine young men.

“I can’t say enough on my Midgets putting up 30 points,” said Director Smith. “And that was a good ball team, they’ve won three games this year. I was as pleased for them as I was for anybody – when the boys walked off the field, they felt like they won the game.”

Midget Head Coach Rodney Thomas was a tickled as Director Smith.

“He said it put a smile on his face seeing the boys smiling when the game was over instead of tears in their eyes,” said Director Smith of Coach Thomas. “He said that was a win for them right there, and that’s how I feel about it, too, because they were happy.”

Those 30 points were the first scored by the Midgets this season, and with such a convincing show of offense heading into the last game of the year, the Midgets might just have the momentum they need to nail down a win.

Quarterback Mason Thomas completed 7 for 15, passing 150 total yards with a pair of touchdown passes. Thomas will surely be an as-



set against Franklin in two weeks.

Austin Garrison received a 30-yard touchdown pass, proving he can handle a ball in a tight situation.

Collin Crowder took a big 25-yard pass in for a score, and lit the board up again when he ran in a 6-yard touchdown.

Hunter Young ran faster than any Wildcat alive that day when he rushed for a 60-yard touchdown run.

The Indian Midgets also made good on three 2-point conversions. Thomas connected with Crowder once more for points, and big hitter Nathan Brooks ran one in on his own. Young came through with the third 2-point conversion, rushing past those Wildcats with blazing speed.

All of the teams have a bye this weekend, but return for the last game of regular season play Saturday, Oct. 18, to face the Franklin Panthers.

“I’m looking forward to having a bye week,” said Director Smith. “We haven’t had a bye week all year, this is it.”

Turnout was slightly down due to the cold weather, but on the whole, Towns County made a good time of it.

“The refs, again, did an awesome job,” said Director Smith. “Everything went good, didn’t have any kind of parents mad, no coaches

mad. Andrews was a good bunch of people – they did real good, I had no problems with them.”

Director Smith and his wife, Robyn, run the concessions for each of the games, and they’ve had some terrific help this year coordinating supplies.

“I’d also like to thank Coach Jim Melton,” said Director Smith. “Mr. Melton, they furnish our drinks for us up there. Of course, I pay the drinks back, but Mr. Melton keeps the drinks ordered so I don’t have to order from Coca-Cola, I can just use their drinks and pay him back. And that’s a big help.”

High School Principal Jonathan Gibson has been a tremendous asset to the teams this year, too, doing everything he can to make sure our little football players and cheerleaders have everything they need. Principal Gibson even invited the youth football program to be a part of the Homecoming Parade Thursday.

“All the kids were in it and the coaches were in it,” said Director Smith. “Then we went back to school with the bonfire. All the kids played in the bouncy houses. Of course, we got a backyard football going on, and that had to take place. Everybody came out, and I was happy with that.”

It would seem that Director Smith and the entire youth football program, from coaches to cheerleaders to football players, receive a huge show of support weekly from the community. Fans turn out, the school system and commissioner are always asking what they can do to help, and even local radio personality Stephen Phillips has been joining in on the fun.

“He’s been telling people about our games coming up,” said Director Smith.

Looking to upcoming Saturdays, the Towns County Youth Indians have a bye week for Oct. 11, face Franklin in Franklin on Oct. 18. Game time: 11 a.m. They Youth Indians head to the playoffs Oct. 25 and then hopefully on to the Cracker Bowl Nov. 1.

Thank you from Towns County Indians Varsity Baseball

The Towns County Indians Varsity Baseball team would like to say thank you to the community for helping make our fund raiser that was held at Ingles on September 27th a huge success! We thank each and every one for your dona-

tions to our team. We would also like to thank Ingles for allowing us to have this fund raiser. Everything is greatly appreciated! Thank you!

Our next baseball bag boy fund raiser will be at Ingles on Saturday, Nov. 22.

New exercise class at Rec Center

Attention ladies! Get fit with YoYo (Yolanda Rowland) your licensed Zin Zumba Fitness provider is now offering classes at The Towns County Recreation and Conference Center. Zumba is Exercise in Disguise. “It’s not a dance class it’s a party!” No one is judging you by your dance ability, just have fun and enjoy the music. We smile during our workouts because fitness is fun. See your smile

in class! Cost is only \$5 per class.

On Mondays Zumba Gold 10:45 – 11:30 a.m. *Low impact on joints, easy to follow for seniors or beginners. On Wednesdays Zumba Step 9:15 – 10 a.m. *Increase cardio, while adding moves that define and sculpt your core and legs. Zumba Gold 10:15 – 11 a.m. For more info: email getfitwithyoyo@yahoo.com. On Facebook: get fit with yoyo.

Youth basketball registration

The Towns County Recreation Department will be having youth basketball registration during the week of Monday the 6th of October 2014 and will run through Saturday the 25th of October 2014. You may register your child at the New Towns County Recreation & Conference Center. Our hours of operation are Monday thru Friday from 9 a.m. til 8 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. til 4 p.m. Fee for the

program will be \$45.

Age divisions will be 6 & Under Coed (5 & 6 year olds), 8 & Under (7 & 8 year olds) 10 & Under divisions (8, 9, & 10 year olds), 12 & Under divisions (11 & 12 year olds). This is for both male and female.

For more information please contact The Towns County Recreation Department at (706)-896-2600.

TCMS falls in shootout to Rabun Gap

By Shawn Jarrard
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Staff Writer

The Towns County Middle School Indians lost a nail biter to Rabun Gap, 42-30, on Wednesday, Oct. 1, at Frank McClure Stadium.

It was the last game of the year for the Indians, who finished out 2-4 on the season.

“Speaking for myself and the coaching staff, we really enjoyed coaching this group,” said Indians’ Head Coach Chris Vardo. “To see the progress that these kids have made, not just from last year to this year, but also the progress that they made throughout the season – we definitely saw kids step up, take control, take charge, and as a coach, especially in the middle school, that’s what you want to see.”

Towns County started off strong, with Brett Denton re-touring a 55-yard punt for a touchdown during their first possession of the game. Quarterback Trent Bradshaw connected with Will Travis in the end zone for a 2-point conversion, and the Indians took the lead early, 8-0.

Rabun Gap answered right back, scoring on their first drive after receiving the kickoff, and brought the score even 8-8 with a successful 2-point conversion.

The two teams continued to battle it out, the Eagles taking the lead 14-8 with 4:34 left in the first quarter. But the Indians brought it right back, bringing the score 16-14 with only 5.9 seconds left before the second quarter.



Towns County hosts Rabun Gap last week. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

Towns County scored again in the second quarter, widening the gap to 22-14.

Bradshaw intercepted the ball with 5:56 in the second quarter, but unable to capitalize on it, the Indians punted away, which led to another Rabun Gap touchdown.

The score was tied 22-22 going into the second half.

Next to take the lead were the Indians, starting the half with a five-play drive in which Bradshaw threw a touchdown pass to Travis, and Andrew Griffin came up with the reception to make good a 2-point conversion.

This would be the last score for Towns County, bringing their lead to 30-22, and Rabun Gap came alive in the fourth quarter, scoring three more touchdowns and one 2-point

conversion in only 7:42.

“You’ve got to give credit to the Rabun Gap kids, they were tough,” said Coach Vardo. “We had some opportunities, and our kids fought through the whole game, but just came up short there at the end.”

For Coach Vardo, it’s less about wins and losses and more about progress.

“To see them progress the way they have makes you proud as a coach,” said Coach Vardo.

VFW Golf Tournament

VFW Golf Tournament will be held on Thursday, Oct. 9 at 8:30 a.m. at Chatuge Shores golf course. Join fellow Veterans and supporters for a day of fun and golf! Call 404-295-6462.