

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Towns County youth football gets out their brooms

By Mason Mitcham
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On Saturday, for the first time this season, Towns County youth football swept the competition, winning three out of three games.

The 5-6 year-olds beat the Chestatee War Eagles 29-8.

The 9-10 year-olds defeated White County in a tense 12-6 match. And the 7-8 year-olds won a close, 6-7 nail-biter against White County, their first victory of the season.

The beginning of the 5-6 year-old game did not look good for Towns County. Off the very first play, Chestatee scored a touchdown, followed by a 2-pt conversion. The young Indians had to battle back from an 8-0 discrepancy. And battle they did.

Brett Young scored the first touchdown for the Indians later in the first, following it with a 2-pt conversion, tying up the first quarter 8-8.

Early in the second, he scored another touchdown, and Dawson Devane ran the conversion, putting Towns County at a 16-8 lead.

With 50 seconds left to go in the second, Brett Young ran about 40 yards and broke four tackles for another touchdown. Cooper Floed ran the extra point, bringing the score to 23-8.

With 3:10 left in the third quarter, Young scored another touchdown, this one for 45 yards. The extra point attempt was unsuccessful, ending the third quarter 29-8.

Despite efforts by both Young and Devane, the score didn't change in the fourth. The game ended with a 29-8 victory by the Indians.

"They just keep winning," Director Jimmy Smith said with a chuckle. For such small, young players, Smith's 5-6 year-olds certainly seem to have something that other athletes their age don't have.

"We encourage them to hit like them older groups," Smith said. "We tell them, 'Guys, look down there at that older group. Watch how they hit. And that's how we work it.'"

The 7-8 year-old game had a slow start. Neither Towns nor White County was able to score until the last minute of the first quarter, at which point Braylen Rader ran for a touchdown. Jacob Young scored the extra point, bringing the score to 7-0 in favor of the Indians.

The White County Warriors retaliated. As the buzzer sounded at the end of the first, White ran for a touchdown. However, their attempt at a 2-pt conversion, though bold, was unsuccessful. The score was 6-7 going into the second.

And that's where it stayed. Both teams battled across the field, neither able to



The Towns County Youth League Indians battle in the trenches. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



A Lumpkin County ball carrier is running out of real estate as the blue jerseys begin to swarm. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

score. Walker Underwood and Jacob Young worked hard to stop the Indians, playing significant roles on both offense and defense.

Late in the second quarter, the Warriors fought their way to about the two-yard line, and would have scored if not for a touchdown-saving tackle by Jensen Gobel.

Perhaps the game would have gone differently if White County had not fumbled the ball late in the third. When the Indians recovered it, they were able to press their advantage, putting White County firmly on the defense.

The game ended with a one-point victory, 7-6 for Towns.

"What a great win," Jimmy Smith said. "That one point was like a hundred points

to us. I can't say enough about my coaching staff for that age group," he went on. "They encourage the kids every week, saying they can win, they can do better. I'm proud of my coaching staff on that end."

In typical fashion, the 9-10 year-olds pulled through a tough match.

White County wasn't prepared to give up a victory, and so the first quarter was a 0-0 battle. Despite Peyton Ivester, who is making a habit out of flattening opponents, White County scored a touchdown with four minutes to go in the second. Towns prevented a conversion, keeping the score 6-0.

Not to be outdone, Ivester scored a 70-yd touchdown off the kickoff return, tying the score.

With five minutes and 16 seconds left in the third quarter, Hayden McClure scored another touchdown. The conversion was unsuccessful, bringing the score to 12-6. White County had no answer, and so the game ended on that score.

"Same old," Jimmy Smith said. "We just keep winning. We've got a tough game coming up this next Saturday at Rabun. They are undefeated like we are, 7-0 to 7-0." He wanted to thank all his coaches by name: Rodney Thomas, Damon Crowder, Randy Smith, and Chris Clinton. "I've had the same coaches, they've coached these kids since seven years old, and as you can see, they've never missed playoffs. They do a good job, they work hard every day at practice. And they just keep winning."



These youngsters are the future of Towns County football. One day they will proudly rep TCHS. Photo/Mason Mitcham



The Towns County Youth Cheerleaders were on hand to increase fan support at a recent high school contest. Photo/Mason Mitcham



The Towns County line digs in. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Towns Cross Country rallies around Coach Ledford in Hayesville

By Mason Mitcham
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Staff Writer

Hayesville, NC - The Carney Classic is always emotional for Towns County cross-country coach Jeannie Ledford.

Coach Buck Carney, who passed away March 26, 2008, after his battle with cancer, was Ledford's high school coach and mentor.

Each year, Ledford makes sure her family of athletes knows how important the meet is to her.

Perhaps that's why they ran so well on Wednesday. The course around Chatuge Dam is incredibly grueling, yet many of Ledford's runners managed to get personal records even on such punishing terrain.

For the first time in recent memory, Ledford's boys got a better team score than her girls. Tyler Grimmsley finished 13 with a time and personal record of 19.23. Thomas Mitchell got 30 with a time and personal record of 21.09. Cesar Bustamante finished 33 at 21.39. Marshall Ledford got 37 with a time of 22.04. Austin Watson came in 46 at 23.18. Chaiz Davenport finished 50 at 23.45, and Hank Chambers got 60 with a time of 25.59. Collectively,



Each one of these kids is Coach Ledford's passion, and Coach Carney was Ledford's example.

they finished 5th out of the powerhouse teams in the Smokey Mountain Conference, plus Franklin, Tuscola and Smokey Mountain.

Despite racing with two of their top five runners, Caitlin Sheffield and Ally Settles, out due to injury, Ledford's girls' team took seventh place. Ansley Vardeman medaled in fourth place with a time of 21.37.

Taylor Vardeman took 37 with a time of 25.48. Kenzi Jenkins got 41 and a personal record of 26.14. Alana Calhoun took 48 at 27.01. Sam Quidjada got 50 at 27.05. Ledford also mentioned that Amaria Barrett, who came in 53, Amanda Garrett, who came in 64, Emma Kate Ledford at 69, and Hannah Green, running her first race ever at 71, are

continuing to improve.

"I tried to take the pressure off of them of worrying about state and worrying about the season," Ledford said. "I said, 'You just go out there and you run from your heart.' And that's how we run this race. This race is not a race of competition. This race is just a race of heart."

Before the scores were



Coach Ledford and her team make some final adjustments. Photos by Lowell Nicholson and Todd Forrest

announced, Coach Ledford gave a speech in memory of the late Coach Carney.

"I stand right here because a coach gave me fire," she said. "A coach gave me determination. A coach made me believe. He was our guide. And with that there is power. Even now, as a coach, I still wish I could pick the phone up and ask him what to do," she admitted before the

gathered athletes, coaches, and spectators.

"But my charge is not to these kids. My charge is to these coaches." She addressed the coaches of the Smokey Mountain Conference.

"On your worst day, remember the words you say to these kids. They will change their lives."