

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Indians suffer tough loss at Union, rebound for home win over Athens Academy

By Jerry Kendall
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The Towns County Indians Varsity Basketball Team may have fallen victim to their own early success last Friday at Class AA Union County where they built huge leads during the first 11 minutes of play at the Panthers' 2015-16 "Throwback Game," being played in the old high school gym known as The Pit.

It is not uncommon for teams and players to experience difficulty at times holding a big lead and especially after playing likely as well as the Indians can play during the early minutes with the accompanying risk of what turned out to be false promise for an impressive win.

Perhaps that was a factor in the Indians seeming to lose some intensity and focus shown in the early minutes of the game.

At any rate, the very capable Panthers took advantage of several uncommon Indian turnovers and lost playing time due to foul problems and used sharp shooting in not only getting back into the game but coming away with an impressive victory, although by a quite deceptive final score of 76-63 when considering the competitiveness of the game.

The Indians would impress tremendously on Saturday on their home court after the disappointing loss when they led almost from start to finish in taking the measure of a quite good Athens Academy team by an also deceptive final score of 83-65 as this game was also more competitive than the final score might indicate.

The split decision for the week leaves the Indians with a 2-2 overall record and 1-0 in Region 8A as Athens Academy is a region opponent.

**Indians 63
Union County 76**

Blairsville - Against Union, the Indians placed all five starters in the scoring column in the first quarter as they raced out to a 17-2 lead by the 2:45 mark and enjoyed a 24-9 advantage by quarter's end. Will de Vries included a trey among ten first quarter points while Colton Shook included a trey among five



Will DeVries drives for two during the first half vs Union County on Friday night. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

and Zach Davenport followed with four.

After the Indians continued on to a 31-12 lead less than two minutes into the second quarter and the aforementioned 34-15 advantage at 5:14, the momentum began to swing just a bit but with the Indians still ahead 40-26 near intermission.

The Panthers turned a pair of Indian turnovers into layups the final 50 seconds, however, giving them renewed hope with a much less daunting deficit of 40-30 at the halftime break.

Davenport led the Indians in second quarter scoring with seven points and Jake Pylrik added four.

The Panthers included two treys in an 8-2 start to the third quarter for just a 42-38 deficit and took a 48-47 lead by the 1:43 mark before the Indians seemed to regain some momentum with a 7-0 run the final minute and a half, highlighted by a de Vries putback basket at the buzzer, for a 54-48 lead.

De Vries contributed seven points and Adam Barrett five during the quarter.

The Indians could not build on the quarter ending spurt, however, as they came out ice cold in the fourth quarter while the Panthers struck for a 14-0 run and a 62-55 lead

by the 3:51 mark.

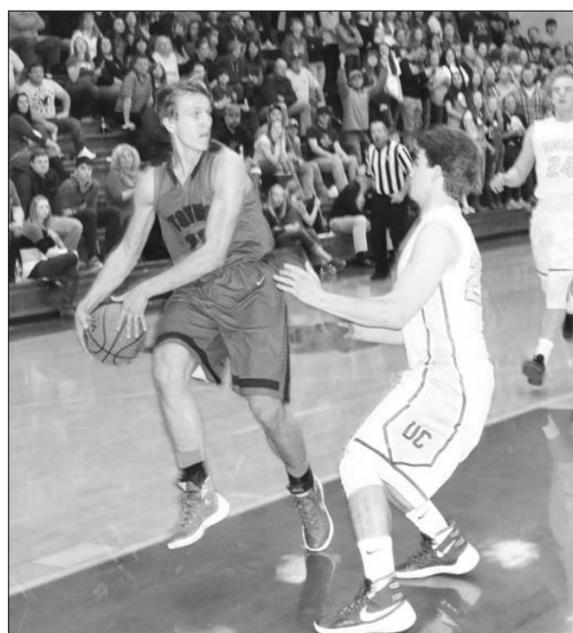
The Indians would not dent the scoreboard until the 2:30 mark but they would not go quietly as a basket by Major Moss and a de Vries trey wrapped around two Union free throws had the Indians back in the hunt at 1:49 with just a 64-60 deficit.

The Panthers sank four of six free throw attempts after that but Shook nailed a trey with 48 seconds left and the Indians still had life with just a 68-63 deficit but they would not score again and the Panthers sank eight straight free throws the final 45.4 seconds in closing out the 76-63 victory.

The Panthers improved their record to 2-3 with the win with a prior victory over Class AAAA Gilmer, an 11-point loss to Class AAA Dawson County, and two losses to highly regarded Class AAA Lumpkin County but with the Panthers nearly avenging a one sided loss at home to Lumpkin by falling by just a 52-51 score at Lumpkin last Tuesday.

Leading scorers for the Indians in the Union County game were de Vries with 21 points, Davenport with 11, Barrett with 10, Moss with 9, and Shook with 8.

Leaders in assists were Moss with 6 and Barrett and Davenport with 2 each ac-



Major Moss dishes off an assist with a behind-the-back pass vs Union County on Friday night. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

cording to your reporter's unofficial tally.

The Panthers were led in scoring by junior Lawson Baenninger with 29 points and sophomore Crawford Colwell with 18.

**Indians 83
Athens Academy 65**

Any concern that the disappointment of losing a big lead and the game to their neighborhood rival on Friday night would carry over and be a detriment to the Indians' fortunes on Saturday were quickly dispelled when the Indians squared off on their home court against Region 8-A foe Athens Academy.

This game would prove to be a more conventional game marked by mostly smaller scoring spurts rather than the early powerful run by the Indians and the decisive later runs by the Panthers.

The Indians overcame early 6-4 and 11-6 Athens Academy leads when they embarked on an 11-0 run between the 3:27 and 26 second marks of the first quarter for a 17-11 lead which became 17-13 by quarter's end.

The run included a Colton Shook basket off a steal and assist by Major Moss at the 2:06 mark which gave them a 12-11 lead they would hold with the

exception of a brief second quarter tie for the remainder of the game.

The Indians would receive Spartan challenges throughout the game but would have an answer for each and every challenge, much like in their earlier win over Social Circle.

Will de Vries included a three point play in a nine points first quarter with Moss contributing four for four free throw shooting to the Indians' cause. Zach Davenport then included a trey among seven second quarter points with de Vries adding six as the two teams played on equal terms resulting in a 35-31 Indian lead at intermission.

The Indians would respond to a brief 19-19 standoff at the 6:25 mark with a basket by de Vries and a deuce and trey by Davenport for a 26-19 lead at 5:11 and Moss would sink three of four free throw attempts and Jake Pylrik a field goal in less than half a minute after the Spartans closed to within 28-27 for a 33-27 Towns lead at 1:51.

The Indians threatened to break the game open when they started the third quarter with a 12-0 run, highlighted by two field goals by Moss and a pair of treys by de Vries for a 47-31 lead less than two-and-a-half minutes into the quarter but the Spartans themselves

responded this time with a 9-1 run highlighted by two treys for just a 48-40 deficit.

Two deuces and a trey by Davenport had the Indians up to a 57-44 lead with just 27 seconds on the clock but the Spartans scored four points during the final 10 seconds for a 57-48 Indian lead entering the fourth quarter.

When the Spartans edged to within 62-55 by the six minutes mark of the fourth quarter Davenport and Shook struck for treys and Adam Barrett added a putback basket with the Indians leading 70-55 by the five minutes mark.

The Spartans then used two treys to advantage in closing to within 71-63 at 3:50 but the Indians included a field goal and four for six free throw shooting by de Vries, four for four free throw accuracy by Barrett, and a two for two appearance at the line by Moss in closing out the impressive 83-65 victory.

The Indians improved their overall record to 2-2, including 1-0 in Region 8A, with the victory while the Spartans saw their record fall to 2-3, including 0-1 in the region. The Spartans' most interesting prior game was at the Walker School in Marietta where the two teams were tied at intermission 32-32 and Walker led by just a 52-46 margin through three quarters on the way to a 76-66 victory. Walker features 6'10" senior Robert Baker who sports 26.7 points and a 14.8 rebounds averages in leading his team to a 5-1 early season record with the loss having been at the hands of defending Class A Private State Champion St. Francis.

The Indians were led in scoring for the game by de Vries with 29 points, Davenport with 19, Moss with 16, Barrett with 10, and Shook with 7 while Moss led in assists with 8 and was followed by Davenport with 4 and Barrett and Shook with 2 each.

The Indians must be highly commended for sinking 27 or 36 free throw attempts, including 14 for 19 in the fourth quarter as they successfully protected and extended their lead.

Junior Jacob Hudson led Athens Academy with 29 points and was followed by freshman Jack Murrah with 19.

Lady Indians fall at Union, defeat Athens Academy at home for first win

By Jerry Kendall
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The Class A Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Basketball Team traveled to Class AA Union County last Friday and saw the Lady Panthers extend a 26-21 halftime lead to 40-30 by the end of the third quarter and then pour it on in the fourth for a 57-32 victory.

The Lady Indians would return home on Saturday, however, and take a hard fought 62-57 victory over fellow Region 8A foe Athens Academy for their first win of the season.

The Lady Panthers benefited from a distinct size and strength advantage in getting their second win of the season after season opening losses to Class AAAA Gilmer and Class AAA Dawson County and Class AAA Lumpkin County before breezing past Lumpkin in a return match at Lumpkin last Tuesday.

Both Gilmer and Dawson County are undefeated with 6-0 and 5-0 records respectively.

The Lady Spartans from Athens Academy entered their game with the Lady Indians with a 2-2 record after seven and eight point wins over the Class A Walker School of Marietta and Class AA Oglethorpe County and five and one point losses to Class A Glascock County and Class AA Washington-Wilkes.

**Lady Indians 32
Union County 57**

Blairsville - The Lady Indians rallied from 4-0 and 8-3 deficits to a 12-8 lead by the 1:38 mark of the first quarter on the strength of two treys and two free throws by Jocelyn Byers and a trey and free throw by Madison Landress with the trey by Landress coming during a 9-0 Lady Indian run and giving them a 9-8 advantage.

The Lady Panthers used a trey and deuce during the final



The Lady Indians were too much for Athens Academy on Saturday (left), Coach Melton and his players huddle at Union County on Friday. Photos by Lowell Nicholson

1:26 of the quarter, however, for a 13-12 lead by quarter's end.

The second quarter would see the Lady Panthers use three treys for a 9-3 run and a 22-15 lead by the 3:53 mark but the Lady Indians again rallied as in the first quarter, using a 6-0 run for just a 22-21 deficit with just 2:07 on the clock.

The Lady Panthers finished the quarter by sinking four straight free throws, however, for a 26-21 lead at the halftime break.

A trey by Madison McClure less than a minute into the third quarter more than matched a Union deuce for just a 28-24 Lady Indian deficit but the Lady Panthers included two treys in a 10-0 run for a 38-24 advantage near the three minutes mark.

The Lady Indians finished the quarter on a 6-2 run for a 40-30 score entering the fourth quarter when the Lady Panthers broke away for a 57-32 victory with their front line players, including three senior

starters, playing most of the quarter.

Scoring leaders for the Lady Indians for the game were Byers with 10 points, Landress with 9, and McClure with 5 while five different Lady Indians contributed one assist each, according to your reporter's unofficial tally.

**Lady Indians 62
Athens Academy 57**

The Lady Indians brushed aside any disappointment with their loss at Union County on Friday night against Athens Academy by playing especially well in a most interesting game which featured an incredible eight ties and ten lead changes by the five and a half minutes mark of the fourth quarter.

The Lady Indians got ahead for good after that and led by mostly very slender margins for the remainder of the game.

The first three lead changes and the first tie came in the first quarter when a trey and deuce for five points by

Jocelyn Byers and a deuce and two free throws by Kirsten Ledford largely accounted for an 11-11 standoff near the minute and a half mark but the Lady Spartans sank a trey and free throw during the final twenty four seconds for a 15-11 first quarter lead.

The Lady Indians trailed in the second quarter until a free throw and field goal by Kristen Henson forced an 18-18 tie and two free throws by Ledford got them ahead 20-18 near the three minutes mark.

It required a field goal by Byers and two free throws by Lea Neumyer the final 1:37 of the quarter, however, for the Lady Indians to take a 24-20 lead to the dressing room at intermission.

The third quarter ended as it started with the Lady Indians still holding a four points lead but now at 42-38 with four lead changes and three ties included.

Byers included a trey and three for four free throw shooting in a ten points quarter

and Ledford sank two deuces for four points with a putback by Ledford getting the last tie of the quarter and Byers' trey giving them a 41-38 lead.

Two free throws by Madison McClure erased what would be the Lady Spartans' last lead for a 44-43 Lady Indian lead at 6:34 of the fourth quarter and Ledford ended the last tie with a putback for a 50-48 Towns lead at the 5:04 mark.

McClure continued a sparkling quarter by scoring the next eight Lady Indian points, twice giving the Lady Indians their biggest leads of the games on a trey for a 55-48 lead and two free throws for a 57-50 lead by the 3:16 mark.

But the persistent Lady Spartans answered with a trey and two free throws by the 2:48 mark for just a 57-55 deficit and they answered a McClure free throw with a deuce for a 58-57 score at the 1:56 mark.

That would be the last Lady Spartan points, however, and a free throw by Madison Landress at 1:38 and three for

four accuracy at the foul line by Byers during the final 21.2 seconds put the game out of reach for the 62-57 Lady Indian victory.

McClure included the trey, a deuce, and seven for nine free throw shooting in a twelve points fourth quarter while Byers sank five of seven attempts at the foul line as the Lady Indians protected their lead.

The Lady Indians were led in scoring for the game by Byers with 22 points, McClure with 16, and Ledford with 14 while McClure led in assists with 2, according to your reporter's tally.

The Lady Indians are to be commended for 25 for 34 accuracy at the foul line where they went 13 for 20 in the fourth quarter as the Lady Spartans were hopeful for enough misses to reclaim the lead.

The much improved Lady Spartans were led in scoring by sophomore Gabby Mastandrea who included five treys among her 23 points.



The Lady Indians were too much for Athens Academy on Saturday (left), Coach Melton and his players huddle at Union County on Friday. Photos by Lowell Nicholson