

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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TCMS boys swat Yellow Jackets

By Joe Collins
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Hayesville, N.C.-The Towns County Middle School boys' basketball team defeated the Hayesville, N.C. Yellow Jackets middle school boys basketball team last week 59-35 increasing their record to 12-3 on the season. The Indians entered the battle with their game faces on and remembered to bring their "A" game when they left Georgia. Adam Barrett had a career night with 18 points, 8 rebounds and 4 assists. He was also 4-for-4 on the freebies as he led the Indians in their domination of the Jackets.

The TCMS boys team held nothing back last Thursday as Head Coach Duncan Weekley had his guys firing on all eight cylinders. The tribe put the Jackets in their rear view mirror early and never missed a beat. Veteran eighth grader Major Moss led the team down court most of the night and had his sights centered as he found open Indians time and again. He ended the night with 8 assists combined with 4 rebounds and 4 points. Brady Moss was second in scoring for



the night with 11 points to go with 3 rebounds and 2 assists. He was also a big asset on defense causing several turnovers.

The rest of the tribe had solid nights as well as Will DeVries was back attacking the boards with 6 rebounds and 4 points. Darringer Barrett had a strong game with 6 points and 4 rebounds along with 2 for 4 from the line while Chayton McClure added his 6 points to the effort along with 3 rebounds and one assist. Cole Ledford had a

3-point shot late in the game and Kobe Denton was aggressive on defense all night and ended up 2 for 2 from the line and 4 rebounds. Seventh grader Zack Davenport found himself adding to the effort as his defense in the final minutes contributed to the Indians victory along with one assist and one rebound.

"I can't say much about how we played tonight cause it was all really solid. I challenged Adam before the game and he impressed me. This is the best game I've seen out of him since the first game of the season. He is a big guy with a lot of talent and we need him to play well inside. We moved the ball well and we got after it good all night. Our free throw percentage is going up and I am glad to see that. We expect to win games like this since Hayesville is young but we did a great job tonight against a determined Jacket team. Now its up to the guys to stay fit during the holidays and hopefully we won't be out of shape when we start back in January," said Weekley.

The team will take the next couple of weeks off and will return to action on Jan. 8 at South Habersham.

TCMS Lady Indians stung in Hayesville

By Joe Collins
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Hayesville, N.C.-The Lady Indians middle school basketball team rolled into Yellow Jacket country last Thursday looking for revenge and they were nearly successful. They hit the court with a vengeance against a Jacket team that had more height and speed. Things went their way early as they led at the end of the first quarter but let the lead slipped away as the game progressed and the lady Indians found themselves trailing as the final buzzer sounded 32-24.

The girls were solid in the first quarter and gave the Jackets a good run. They were quick up and down the floor and were handling the ball better on offense. Some good hustle early made their defense very aggressive. Madison Landress, Kirsten Henson, Madison Stroud and Kirsten Ledford were up front giving the Jacket ball handlers a fit and causing some turnovers that the Indians capitalized on and led at the end of the first quarter 7-3.



The Indians effort stalled as the second quarter began and the Jackets out scored the tribe by 8 points early and took the lead. The Indians were never able to see the front of the Jackets car again as they trailed the rest of the game and Hayesville took the checkered flag.

The Jacket defense got aggressive and the Lady Indians started trying to force their way inside and began to make a lot of turnovers. "We played hard but we are making to many turnovers. Our defense is doing a good job but we are not handling the ball well coming

down court. The turnovers are killing us," stated a frustrated Head Coach Lana Parker.

The girls played better in this game than they did on Dec. 8 at home. Parker praised her team, "We played them a better game this time and I see a lot of improvement but we still need to get the ball inside better." Henson led the team in scoring with 8 points, Ledford followed with 6 points; Landress with 4 points and Emory Patton had 2 points. It was also good to see some of the seventh graders in the action as Madison Thomas and Jordan Hyatt each had 2 points. We need to work on our control and take more time to set up our plays. We have to stop trying to force the issues on offense and giving the ball away," said Parker.

The Lady Indians will now take a two-week break until after the holidays when they return on Jan. 8 against South Habersham at home. Game time is 4:15 p.m. for the sixth and seventh grade with the eighth grade to follow around 5:45 p.m. Enjoy the holidays and make plans to come and see some good basketball when the girls return in 2013.

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Piedmont, Ala Bulldogs: After opening the season with a 58-56 win over Cherokee County, Ala (2-7), Piedmont (2-7) lost seven straight. The Bulldogs did recover with a 62-28 victory over Wellborn, Ala (2-3) on Dec. 17th. During the seven-game skid, Piedmont faced seven consecutive opponents with a winning record, including the 1st and 2nd ranked teams in the state. In Piedmont's last appearance in the Battle of the States in 2010, they finished third with wins over Gordon Lee, 64-45, and Hayesville NC, 63-47. The Bulldogs fell to Murphy, NC, 73-64 on Day Two before Murphy lost 58-47 to Union County in the Championship Game.

Earlier this season, Piedmont Coach Tommy Lewis celebrated his 500th career basketball win. The Bulldogs could also benefit from a new transfer, Ty Sparks from Randolph County, AL. Following the highly controversial dismissal of the Randolph football coach in October, Sparks, the team's quarterback, left the team and as of this writing, is still seeking approval from the Alabama Athletic Association to play basketball at Piedmont.

Despite losing five seniors, the Bulldogs opened the

season ranked No. 6 in Alabama's Class AAA. Piedmont did feature a seventh grader, an eighth grader, a freshman and a sophomore during their 2010 appearance in the BOTS. Unlike Georgia, Alabama's middle schoolers are allowed to play varsity basketball without it being counted against their four-years of high school eligibility.

Hokes Bluff, Ala Lady Eagles: The Lady Eagles finished fifth in last year's BOTS following losses to Union County and Polk County, Tenn and a win over Murphy, NC, and will be replacing 35 points-per-game from last year's roster. Kelsey Turner, Savannah Ward, Summer Wilson, Emily Johns, and Malory Moland won't be suiting up for the Lady Eagles but that hasn't appeared to have affected Head Coach Jason Shields' Hokes Bluff squad in the early going.

Hokes Bluff enters the tournament sporting a 9-2 record that included wins over 8th Ranked Glencoe, Ala and 10th Ranked Collinsville, Ala. Sophomore sharpshooter Hannah Evans is back to lead the Lady Eagles after playing as an 8th grader in the 2010 Tournament. Others to watch for Hokes Bluff are junior Carlie Shields, Katie Alford, Elizabeth White, and Kiesha Chapman.

Gordon Lee Lady Trojans: The Lady Trojans will be going for a three-peat during this year's Battle of the States. They return the 2010 BOTS MVP Cassidy Blevins, not to mention guard Katie Barger, forward Sara Clayton, and 6-4 center Katelyn Lee. Gordon Lee will suffer from the loss of 2011 BOTS. MVP Livia Bradbury and forward Lexis Robertson. The Lady Trojans should return enough balance from last year's 26-4, State Sweet-16 squad with Blevins and Barger in the backcourt along with Lee down low.

Currently Gordon Lee sits at 6-3 on the season with one of the losses coming to 8-0 Southwest Atlanta Christian (61-44) who defeated Buford's "All-Metro All-Star Team," 55-54 earlier this month.

SWAC also knocked off Gordon Lee in the second round of last year's State Tournament and reached the Class A State Finals before falling to Wesleyan.

The Lady Trojans' brutal early schedule included one Class AAAAAA school and three Class AAAA schools and a tough Meigs County, Tenn squad. Gordon Lee has also split its two early meetings with Bremen from Class AA.

Gordon Lee Trojans: The Trojans return a trio of

guards from a very deep squad that won two games in last year's Battle of the States.

Senior guard Daniel Brooks returns after posting 24 points twice in the 2011 BOTS, against eventual-champ Hayesville and during their 55-43 victory over Union County on Day Three.

Also returning in the backcourt is seniors Cody Wilson and Landon O'Neil. The Trojans graduated three seniors from last season with only one being a starter - guard Cody Cochran.

Like, the Lady Trojans, the boys have faced a vicious early season schedule but enter the tournament with a 3-6 record, the exact opposite of the girls. However, they do own convincing wins over Class AAAA's Southwest Whitfield 66-52, and two victories over Bremen. The only red ink they have on their ledger came to Dwight Howard's Alma Mater, Southwest Atlanta Christian, 83-57.

Dawson County Lady Tigers: Dawson County returns 12 players from last season and enters the tournament with a 9-1 record after defeating West Forsyth 62-23 last Thursday evening. Sophomore post player Ashley Parker had a great night and was the leading scorer with 16 points and 7

rebounds. Carly Gilreath scored 14 points, Kenna Seitz had 8, Hannah Porter scored 7, Karlie Bearden had 6, Sheyenne Seabolt had 4, Allie Costley had 3, and Whitney Glover and Alison Honea scored 2 points each. The Lady Tigers impressive resume includes a 79-39 victory over White County (7-4) that saw Seabolt put up 21 points and Gilreath pour in 20. Parker had 11 points. Seitz and Porter both scored 7 points, Karlie had 5, Costley had 4, Honea scored 2, and scored 2 points and pulled down 6 rebounds.

White County had previously defeated Union County 46-45 in overtime. The Tigers' only loss came to Banks County 66-58.

"We are looking forward to coming back to the tournament," said Dawson County Head Girls Coach Steve Sweat. "Coach Melton does a great job of running the whole thing. It is a tournament where you better be ready to play or you will get killed."

Dawson County Tigers: The team with the most impressive resume of the tournament belongs to Coach Thad Burgess' Dawson County Tigers. The defending Region 8-AA Champion and State Elite 8 squad enter the tournament with a 10-0 record after return-

ing the entire roster from last season's historic run that saw the Tigers knock off Buford in the State Sweet 16.

The Tigers are led by seniors Tyler Dominy, Gunnar Armstrong, Bruce Clark, Will Anglin, and juniors Jonathan Sanderson, Lucas Pain, and Jackson Putnam.

Coach Burgess is looking forward to his second Battle of the States Tournament and looks for his team to improve on last year's performance that saw them get upset by Southside, Ala, preventing the much anticipated Hayesville, NC vs Dawson County matchup in the finals.

This year, Coach Burgess is hoping his Tigers can reach the Finals, where, if it were up to him, they would face Union County.

"This year is the first time in a long time that we haven't had Union on the schedule," Coach Burgess said. "Hopefully we can keep the rivalry going. It would be an awesome atmosphere if we played an undefeated Union team in the final game. But we got three good teams on our side of the bracket so we've got our hands full before we reach the finals. So we're really excited about coming up there. We'll take off a few days for Christmas then practice on the 26th"

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School in Norcross to eliminate them in the Elite Eight and Sweet Sixteen rounds respectively those two years. The Wesleyan Girls went on to easily win their sixth and seventh state championships, split between Class AA and Class A, in the last nine years.

The Lady Indians continued their stellar run the last two years, winning Region 8A Championships both years along with making it to the state tournament for the eleventh and twelfth times in fourteen years under Head Coach Jim Melton. In 2010, the Lady Indians finished second in the Battle of the States to Gordon Lee but wound up with a spectacular 27-2 record, falling this time in the sweet sixteen round of the Class A State Tournament to Pace Academy of Atlanta, the eventual state runner up to Wesleyan. Pace used incredible runs at the start and end of the game in taking the victory. They sank thirteen of their first twenty shots for a 27-8 lead and after the Lady Indians battled back for a 45-44 lead, hit their next eight field goal and their next four free throw attempts with three of the field goals being 3-pointers in taking a 69-54 victory.

The most competitive grouping of teams to date in the Tournament would have to be the Boys field in 1995 when five of a total of twelve contests were decided in overtime and four other games were decided by seven or fewer points. A comparison of results of some of the contests reveals the competitiveness of the 1995 Tournament from top to bottom. Tournament Champion Walhalla was taken to three overtimes in the semi-finals by Fourth Place finisher Towns County who was taken to overtime by Seventh Place Gilmer (Georgia) who was taken to overtime by Eighth Place

Polk County during the course of the tournament.

Further, the competitiveness of the four games among the top four finishers in 1995 is just as striking when including Second Place Franklin and Third Place Hayesville in the comparison. Franklin won in overtime in the semi-final game over Hayesville while the Championship game between Walhalla and Franklin and the Third Place Game between Hayesville and Towns County were decided by four and two points respectively.

PLAYERS FROM PRIOR TOURNAMENTS ACHIEVING CONTINUING SUCCESS - There have been numerous individual performers from the Battle of the States who have pursued their basketball careers and in other sports as well with great success in college, including in Division I, through the years. It would be impossible to list or even know of all the performers who have continued their careers in college but several will be identified here.

Some of the more notable among the Division I signees are Lee Scruggs, a 6'10" three year starter in the Tournament for Franklin, who went on to stardom for three years at Georgetown University in Washington, DC; Angelina Miller, also a three year starter in the Tournament for McEachern (Georgia), who was a top player for four years at Georgia State University in Atlanta; and Megan Isom of Paideia, a two year starter at Georgia Tech. Wynne Whitley of Holy Innocents' finished her career several years ago at Duke University as did Andrea Neeley of Union County at Georgia State University.

Of more recent vintage, two all tournament players from previous Battles of the States both

battled injury but had significant success at Division I Kennesaw State University. Nikki Gurley of Union County earned all tournament honors in the Battle of the States three times during her career while Stephanie Searce of Fannin County made the all tournament squad in her only appearance in 2003. Kennesaw State, by the way, is coached by Colby Tilley who directed Truett McConnell College to a Junior College National Championship in 1980 with Towns County's own Martha Moss being a superstar on that team.

Two other Division I players to mention are all tournament player Matt Womack of North Forsyth from 2003 and Union County's Candace Williams, a three time all tournament selection through the 2008 tournament, who each participated for a year as walk on players at the University of Georgia. Kori Penland of Gordon Lee, a 2007 Battle of the States all tournament player, completed two seasons of basketball at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga before leaving after limited action, in part due to injury, to spend more time working with faith-based groups.

And it just came to light upon his playing in an overtime loss at Young Harris College last year that 2006 Battle of the States All Tournament selection David Pruett of Lakeview Academy (Georgia) is a star player at Division II Lander University in Greenwood, South Carolina.

Locally, 1997 Towns County Graduate Keisha Taylor was a top player for NCAA Division II Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia, with the Lady Cougars being the top ranked team in the nation for much of the 2001 season. The Lady Cougars made

it to the National Final Four for the second year in a row before being upset in a close decision for their only loss of the season by Cal Poly-Pomona, the eventual National Champion, in the Semi Finals.

Three vital members of the Towns County Lady Indians Class A State Final Four Team in 2000 completed successful four year college careers. Brandy McNabb completed her career in 2004 at LaGrange College as did Olivia Swanson in 2005 while Candice Blythe completed her career in 2004 at Piedmont College under the late Head Coach Charles Cooper, the 2001 Battle of the States Breakfast Banquet Speaker. McNabb and Blythe were two year starters at Truett McConnell Junior College before moving on to their respective four year schools. Blythe returned to Piedmont for the 2005 season as an assistant coach and recently served for two years as the top assistant for the Towns County Lady Indians.

Further, Heath Hooper of Towns County made the 2004 Battle of the States All Tournament Team and continued his basketball career at Reinhardt College, now Reinhardt University, in Waleska. He battled injury throughout his four years at Reinhardt but saw some quality playing time, including several starting assignments as a freshman, when able to play. He followed up service as an assistant coach at Reinhardt to become a valued assistant coach for the newly revived Young Harris College men's basketball team for two years before leaving for a lucrative teaching assignment at Shorter University in Rome prior to this season.

Five members of the 2008

Towns County State Final Four team have gone on to play college basketball with Amanda Irwin being the first at Division II Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville for three years. Nikki Winn, Ellie Parton, and Missy Conrad then played basketball during the first year of the revived basketball program at Young Harris College in 2011 with Winn being at or near the top in several statistical categories.

Conrad saw lots of action that first year, including as a starter, and was joined by Jordan Moss for the second YHC season of 2012 when Moss included team leading 19 points and 11 rebounds in one game among her contributions off the bench as a freshman. Of greater significance than their athletic contributions, all four Lady Indians at YHC have excelled in the classroom in making the dean's list and Moss was honored by receiving the Most Promising Freshman Scholar Athlete Award last year. Conrad, Irwin, Moss, and Winn all received Battle of the States All Tournament recognition on at least one occasion while Parton was an All Region performer in Cross Country as a freshman at Young Harris during the school's last year in junior college prior to being approved for NCAA Division II status.

Three Battle of the States participants appeared in the starting lineup in a game during the initial season at Young Harris between the Lady Mountain Lions and Tennessee Wesleyan. In addition to the presence of Winn and Conrad, former Polk County Wildkitten Candace Cain, a former Most Valuable Player in the tournament, led her team in scoring in a 76-68 victory.

And the beat continues for the Lady Indians as three seniors from last year's team have continued their careers at the college level as freshmen. Single game and career statewide 3-point scorer Gabby Arencibia is playing at North Georgia College and State University in Dahlonega, Ali Bleckley at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, and Lindsay Patton at Point University in West Point, Georgia. Of the three, Bleckley is easily seeing the most action as a starter for the Lady Petrels where she easily leads her team in 3-pointers made and percentage and is second in rebounding and fourth in scoring.

Katrina Evans is another two time Battle of the States All Tournament selection signed for the Young Harris College team for this year. She was the Smoky Mountain Conference Player of the Year at Murphy High School last year and is the daughter of former Towns County athlete Danny Evans but is having to sit out this year due to injury.

AND FINALLY - Fans interested in top flight basketball action involving current and future individual superstar athletes and championship games, seventh place games, or anywhere in between, should give serious consideration to attending the 2012 Battle of the States Tournament. Complete girls and boys brackets are included in this week's paper but in their opening games the Lady Indians will face Murphy, NC at 7 p.m. on Thursday with the Indians to follow against Murphy, NC at 8 p.m.

Starting times and opponents for future games in the Tournament for all teams will be based upon the results of the contests as they are played.