

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Towns County wrestling sending seven to Sectionals this weekend

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Seven Towns County wrestlers are headed to the Sectionals Tournament at George Walton Academy on Saturday, Feb. 7, for a chance to compete at the state level.

Kaine Hoffman at 106 pounds and Thomas Mitchell at 113 pounds both finished runners up in their weight classes at the 2015 Area 4 Traditional Wrestling Tournament at Commerce High School on Saturday, Jan. 31.

Aaron Collier at 132, Daulton Rogers at 152 and Kyle Davis at 220 took third place honors, while Russell Cox at 182 and Daniel Crowder at 285 finished fourth.

And that's all that was needed, a Top 4 finish, to advance to Sectionals.

Peyton Smith at 120 and Nick Shook at 160 qualified as alternates for this Saturday's event, and will get a chance to grapple if any wrestler from this area in their weight classes cannot wrestle Saturday.

"All this does is just



The Towns County wrestlers staying focused during the Area Tournament last weekend. The Indians had seven wrestlers qualify for State Sectionals. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

qualify us for the state tournament," said Head Coach Jeff Stowers. "They take the Top 4 out of each Area, you go to Sectionals. And then the Top 4 from the Sectionals will go to the State Tournament. And really, every tournament is its own individual tournament. So, let's just say something happens and Nick Shook gets

in the tournament next week. He could theoretically still win State if he wrestles his way back through in State."

Coach Stowers is proud of his Indians, as more than half of the team qualified to move forward to the next qualifying round.

"We wrestled really well," said Coach Stowers.

"We had some kids that lost some heartbreaking matches, but we won some big matches, we had some big upsets. We did some really good things today, and I'm extremely proud of the guys."

"My heart breaks for kids like Nick and Peyton and Dylan Roberts and Dalton Key, and kids that don't

qualify. They work so hard all year long and get to this tournament, and you can't afford to have a bad day. And I don't know that anybody really wrestled badly today for us, they just didn't wrestle well enough."

For some Indians, this was the last opportunity to wrestle for the season, while

others go on to test their might at least once more.

"It's kind of a bitter-sweet day," said Coach Stowers. "I'm extremely happy for the guys that qualified and moved on. We did some really good things. But, you know, it's kind of sad, because several kids' season came to an end today."

TCMS Baseball invites everyone to Saturday fundraiser

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Middle School Baseball Team is kicking its season off with a fundraiser, and Head Coach Shea Taylor and his Indians invite the entire community to attend on Saturday, Feb. 7, at noon on the Towns County High School baseball field.

"We're going to be selling hotdog plates for people," said Coach Taylor. "They're \$6 apiece, and that's for people to come get a hotdog, a drink, chips and slaw."

The main attraction of the fundraising event will be a tennis ball toss game, which will feature fabulous prizes, including a top prize of a \$100 Visa Card.

But the prizes don't stop there.

"I have over \$500 worth of prizes to give away," said Coach Taylor. "Home Depot, Walmart, all those places

helped us out and gave us prizes. All the local restaurants, some local businesses, they've all donated door prizes for people to come and win for the game that we're going to have, and I might just do a few random drawings for door prizes."

Patrons of the fundraiser will be able to purchase tennis balls — one throw for \$5, three throws for \$10 — to throw at targets for a chance to win these prizes.

The money will benefit the team's general baseball account, as outfitting the kids for the new season has been quite costly.

"The main thing for the fundraiser is to help us cover equipment," said Coach Taylor. "The school, of course, helps take care of the uniforms, so the school covered the uniforms for us. But we're raising money for everything else. From equipment to socks, belts, hats. And it's crazy, people don't realize it, but it's really expensive to

purchase that stuff."

New helmets are also needed, as well as a new team bat. And the team performed some renovations to the practice field, replacing some of the old bases with new ones.

Coach Taylor teaches fourth-grade science at Towns County Elementary School, and has been coaching middle school baseball for four years. He is excited about the upcoming season.

"Everybody's excited," said Coach Taylor. "I have 10 returning players from last year, so that's always a good thing to have a large number of kids coming back to be with me another year. I've got a lot of good kids on the team, and they come from good families. I'm looking forward to having a great season, and we would love all the support we can get from the community."

Last season ended on a winning note, as the Indians finished 7-6 overall. And the season before that was a win-

ning season as well. Coach Taylor hopes to continue that trend, and the Indians are already hard at work, practicing every day after school.

"I'm counting on six kids to be able to pitch for me, so I'm glad of that because pitchers are hard to come by, especially in middle school," said Coach Taylor. "I have definitely got high expectations for this team, so hopefully we'll get it together and it's going to turn out to be a successful year."

After turning out to support the local children at the fundraiser, Towns County residents can come and watch the first matchup of the year, a scrimmage game against Martins Creek at home on Monday, Feb. 9, starting at 4:30 p.m. on the TCHS baseball field.

The first official game of the season is on Valentine's Day at home at the high school field, and will feature a double-header against George Walton Academy starting at noon.

NASCAR 2015

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Petty has reasons for optimism

Richard Petty has reason for optimism heading into the 2015 racing season. His No. 43 car with Aric Almirola behind the wheel won the July race at Daytona, and the organization has moved into larger headquarters.

Almirola will be joined by Sam Hornish, who replaced Marcos Ambrose.

"It was a breakout year for us," said Petty. "I think Sam brings a lot of versatility. Marcos (Ambrose) was super on road courses and stuff, but he never got the hang of being ready. He could have good races and bad races and good times in the races, but I think Sam will be much more consistent with it."

"In our testing, (Hornish and Almirola) both felt the same thing in the car. Whether they'd change the air pressure or they'd change the springs and both of them feel the same thing. With Marcos, he was one way and Aric was the other way and so it was hard to compare them. Now we've got two cars that we can sit down and say, 'OK, you try this and I'll try that and if it works, we'll put it on the other car.' That should be an advantage for all of us."

Richard Petty Motorsports (RPM) is a two-car Sprint Cup Series race team owned by seven-time NASCAR champion Richard Petty and New York businessman Andrew M. Murstein. The team was founded as Evernham Motorsports in 2000 by former crew chief Ray Evernham, entering full-time competition as a two-car operation in 2001. The organization was renamed Gillett Evernham Motorsports in 2007 after former Montreal Canadiens and Liverpool, owner George Gillett bought a controlling interest from founder Evernham, and took on its current name after merging with Petty's team Petty Enterprises in 2009.

Known for its factory backing from Dodge since its inception, the team switched to Ford in late 2009 and merged with Yates Racing for 2010. The team has the odd distinc-



Rick Hendrick and Richard Petty in 2009

tion of being the result of three successful teams (Evernham, Petty, & Yates) merging after falling on hard times.

After funding issues due to the Gillett family's financial woes, in November 2010, an investment group including Andrew M. Murstein and his Medallion Financial Corporation, signed and closed sale on racing assets of Richard Petty Motorsports. Petty, Murstein, and Medallion Financial are the current owners of the team, while Evernham and Gillett are no longer involved with the team.

After the 2008 season, turmoil emerged when A.J. Allmendinger and Reed Sorenson were signed to drive for the team, while Elliott Sadler was released from his ride in the 19 car and planned to sue the team to keep his job.

By 2010, RPM's continued operation was put into question when lead driver Kasey Kahne announced his departure by the end of the season. Kahne's decision was in the midst of financial problems for the Gillett family in several of their ventures, which included George Gillett defaulting on a \$90 million loan he had used to purchase the team. With lackluster performance and rumors from week-to-week that the team would shut down, the chaos peaked in October when RPM's cars for the second Talladega race were briefly confis-

cated, and again in November when RPM's four team haulers remained parked at Texas Motor Speedway instead of heading to the next race at Phoenix, in both cases due to payment issues with engine and equipment supplier Roush Fenway Racing. The situation was resolved in November, when Richard Petty partnered with Medallion Financial and DGB investments to purchase the team for "less than \$50 million." Petty once again was at the helm of a race team, and retained a one-third stake in the company by investing "several million dollars" of his own money.

Petty, bolstered by a partnership with New York-based Medallion Financial Corporation, bought out Gillett and was back to actually managing a race team and not just merely having his name on the door. Still, the margins were tight, the ledger was red, and the results on the racetrack were lacking.

It remained that way for the next four years, even as Almirola came on board full-time and teammate Marcos Ambrose picked up a pair of road-course wins.

"It was a mighty big hole we were sitting down in," Petty continued. "Instead of getting frustrated, we just kept working and tried to be patient. But anybody who knows me knows that patience isn't exactly my

thing."

The team currently fields the No. 9 for Sam Hornish, Jr. and the No. 43 for Aric Almirola in the Sprint Cup Series, and the No. 43 for Dakoda Armstrong in the Xfinity Series.

Over the winter, RPM moved into new Mooresville, North Carolina, headquarters that was actually its last HQ as Petty Enterprises. The partnership with Roush Fenway is still in place, but for the first time in years, the team is building its own cars, not waiting on deliveries from elsewhere.

Former Indy 500 champion Sam Hornish Jr. has replaced Ambrose, and last week CEO Brian Moffitt announced that a new sponsorship deal with beverage Twisted Tea will ensure that Hornish will run the entire 2015 season.

DALE JR. NOT FOCUSED ON RETIREMENT

With Jeff Gordon announcing his retirement at the end of 2015, the attention focused on Dale Earnhardt Jr. and his future plans.

Unlike Gordon, the "R" word isn't in Junior's foreseeable future.

Just last week, he told reporters he would like to expand his driving to include the Truck Series.

"Jeff made his decision based on factors in his life, whether it be his health or his kids," Earnhardt said. "I don't have any back issues and I don't have any kids on the way. I don't have any factors."

Right now, Earnhardt said he can't think about quitting because he's enjoying his job so much. He said the last five years have been the most fun he's ever had driving a race car.

"I didn't even know I could have this much fun," he continued. "Last year, I felt like a kid. I had the same feeling I had when I would drive down to Myrtle Beach with my Late Model. We were just on top of the world having so much fun. That freedom came back in the last couple years to just enjoy it and just release the pressure."



Start this Valentine's Day giving the gift of love. Join "TEAM TRICIA"

Tricia Spear has been giving back to this community, day after day for over a dozen years. Now she is fighting a serious illness and she needs all of us to help with her recovery.

Join us and participate in the 5k Race or the 1 Mile Walk

Place: Meeks Park, Blairsville 9am/Registration 10am/Race-Walk

Registration Fees RUN \$25 WALK \$20

All registrants will get a free Race T-Shirt, while supply lasts. Pre-register by January 27th to be guaranteed a Race T-shirt

Registration Forms available online at Active.com or pick one up at Blairsville Chamber of Commerce, Seasons Inn, Mountain Shelter Thrift Store (Blairsville) or the Union General Wellness Center

Interested in being a sponsor and having your business listed on the T-Shirts? Call the Thrift Store at 706-745-0033 by Jan. 27th

The monies raised at this event will go to the Tricia Spear Recovery Fund.

Visit our event Page. No Greater Love 5k

Tai Chi and Yoga at Rec Center

Tai Chi for Arthritis is a program endorsed by the Arthritis Foundation of Georgia. Not only has this exercise been shown to be effective in alleviating joint pain, but it has also been shown to help with other medical issues. Learning Tai Chi will improve balance, promote strength and flexibility, as well as may be helpful with memory. This is a short, easily learned Tai Chi form. For those who cannot stand to do the form, it will also be demonstrated doing seated in a chair.

This class will meet Thursday mornings starting January 29th at 10:45 AM.

This class will be 4 weeks for a total fee of only \$30 (drop ins \$10 for each class session). Class will be led by Pat Tomczyk who has taken the Arthritis Foundation training and is an experienced Tai Chi and Yoga teacher as well as a retired RN.

Our Yoga program continues with gentle Yoga at 4 PM on Mondays and Yoga plus Pilates Abdominals work on Thursdays at 9:30 AM.

All classes will be held at The Towns County Recreation and Conference Center at Foster Park. For additional information please contact us at 706-896-2600. T(Feb.4,11)SH

Baseball registration at Rec Center

The Towns County Recreation Dept. is having registration for softball and baseball for boys and girls ages 8 thru 14 beginning February 9, 2015 thru February 21, 2015. The fee for registration is \$45. Sign-ups are held at the new

Towns County Recreation Center. Our hours of operation are Monday thru Friday 9 a.m. till 8 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. till 4 p.m. If you have any questions please call the Recreation Department at 706-896-2600. T(Feb.4,11)SH

Galaxy Bowling Scores

Monday Night Ladies: Linda Nichols 193 **Monday Night Men:** Bob Brown 208, Larry Canaan 227, 227, 234, Mike Davis 235, 214, 200, Gary Brown 215, 204, 247, Taz Matetzschk 206, BJ Gilbert 225, 266, 257, 748 Series, DJ DeJoseph 200, 225, Jay Burrell 215, 242, Brett Hogsed 205, Johnathan Everett 234, 201, John Stevens 216, Ray Everett 222, 219, Jeb Plott 233, 204, Jason Swanson 252, Bob Bischoff 222, Russ Southcott 226, 224, 206, Curtis corn 206, Dewey Allen 207, Bill Smith 224, Del Neiffer 217, 234, Joe Teague 212 Hazel Farmer

League: Paul Napolitano 202, Dewey Allen 211, Del Neiffer 203, 212, Mel White 243, Ron Wingate 205, Ken Thigpen 243, Mo Rodgers 231, Ron Gaucher 196 **Thursday Night Fun League:** Dewey Allen 228, Mark Silvers 208, DJ DeJoseph 248, 246, John Moore 216, Denise Baldwin 200, 234, Zach Moore 208, Tim Moore 247, 268, 195, 710 Series, Taz Matetzschk 224, 213, Johnathan Everett 247, Tony Lynch 203, 255, Ray Everett 210, 203, Chuck Reeves 220, Russ Southcott 227, 215, 259, 701 Series, Jerry Thomas 201, 209, Pam Clark 214

So that's made me really think I can do this a lot longer. I think I'll stop racing when my health is an issue or I don't feel like I'm in a competitive car or I feel like I've lost a step.

"I've never driven a truck before and I've always had the interest to race a truck. I'd tell you I would run Martinsville, today, but Cole Whitt's going to get all the shorter tracks due to his age, and we need to get him that experience when we can, and it's a great opportunity at Martinsville for him to

run. So if I run a race, it'll be at a bigger track where Cole's not quite cleared to run through NASCAR's process."

Racing Trivia Question: How many Cup wins did Richard Petty have during his career?

Last Week's Question: Where did Jeff Gordon win his first Cup race? **Answer:** It was the Coca-Cola 600, May 29, 1994 at Charlotte.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at: www.hodges@race500.com.