

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Boys advance to Elite 8; Crowder breaks single-season scoring record

Lady Indians eliminated from postseason by sixth-ranked Mt. Zion-Carroll

By Jeremy Foster
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Indians persevered over tough competition last week to advance to the Elite 8 round of the Georgia High School Association Class A Public State Championship Playoffs, scheduled for Wednesday, March 2, at 6 p.m. at Manchester High School.

Both the Indians and Lady Indians made it into the playoffs this year after excellent finishes in regular season play, though the girls team wrapped up its postseason against No. 6-ranked Mt. Zion-Carroll in an away game loss on Tuesday, Feb. 22.

Junior Sarah Shook led in scoring with 28 points during a contest that ended in Mt. Zion's favor, 63-43. The Lady Indians culminated their season 8-18 overall with a 5-7 region record to earn Fourth Place in Class A Region 8.

"The girls played hard and kept it close until the fourth period," Girls Head Coach Shea Taylor said of the Feb. 22 game. "I am proud of the girls for making it this far. We have a lot of work to do in the offseason and are looking to build off of this one."

The Indians played in their first round of the playoffs on Wednesday, Feb. 23, against Bowden County at home in Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium.

Bowden gained first control of the ball from the tipoff, but sophomore Zane Floyd quickly grabbed it for the Indians and scored the first 2 points of the game for Towns County.

Other scorers throughout the first period were senior Collin Crowder, sophomore Connor Chastain, and junior Lane Rouse to enter the second period ahead 26-19.

Scorers for the rest of the game were Floyd, Chastain, senior Kyle Oakes, sophomore Tanner Cunningham, Rouse and Crowder to end the matchup victorious at 76-51, earning them a spot in the Sweet 16 later in the week.

"We set out a clear mission tonight and made a big statement, and it was just



Senior Collin Crowder hangs and scores during the Indians' first round victory over Bowden. Crowder would go on to become the program's single-season scoring leader. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

a tight match throughout that nevertheless ended in another Towns County victory, 58-51, to send the boys to the Elite 8 this week.

"Towns was able to consistently score in the paint despite the 6-foot-8-inch center of Charlton," Hunnicutt said. "Towns built a 9-point lead in the first half before Charlton stormed back. Towns again built a 10-point lead, and Charlton once again came back to tie the game."

"Collin Crowder and Zane Floyd hit huge buckets to spark the Indians on a 10-3 run to close the game. Zane Floyd hit a huge 3 with two minutes left to put the Indians up by 3. Crowder kept the lead up for Towns by knocking down a huge layup while getting fouled."

"He made the free throw to put Towns up by 6. Floyd had a game-winning steal to seal the game. Collin Crowder led scoring with 29, and Floyd

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Junior Sarah Shook goes up for two of her team-high 28 points at Mt. Zion-Carroll during last week's Class A-Public Girls State Tournament. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

pitched in 12 points." While in South Georgia for the game, the Indians made a brief detour for some R & R on Jekyll Island. Now, Towns County will travel to face fifth-ranked Manchester High School on Wednesday, having notched their 20th win of the season.

"I am so proud of these boys," Hunnicutt said. "Everybody in our program has been locked in the last week, and it has been a great season thus far."

"I cannot say enough about these kids, and beyond that, Alan Rogers and Michael Anderson are indispensable as coaches; their basketball wisdom is outstanding, and they bleed Towns County Blue."

Additionally, Hunnicutt added that "the fans have been unbelievable."

"We brought a sizable crowd to the other end of the state," Hunnicutt said. "We have had people in the community donate to the program to pay for hotel rooms when we go on these long trips. I just love this team and community. Hopefully, we can keep this ride going."



Tabitha Barnes (21) looks on as Emily Vargas (23) attempts a free throw during last week's visit to Mt. Zion. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



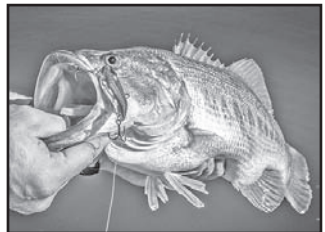
The Indians basketball team made a stop at Jekyll Island during last week's Sweet-16 trip to Charlton County. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Bass fishing tournament March 12 will benefit conservation

A bass fishing tournament set for Saturday, March 12, 2022 at Lake Chatuge will help support conservation projects protecting clean water and crucial lands in western North Carolina.

Teams are setting off at safe light, estimated to be around 7 a.m. and \$2,000 worth of prizes will be awarded to the top three teams weighing in at 3 p.m. Proceeds will go to Mainspring Conservation Trust, a regional land trust that helps conserve the waters, forests, farms and cultural heritage in the six western-most counties in North Carolina and northern Rabun County, GA.

"So many people in our service area are passionate about fishing and hunting," says Mainspring Stewardship Associate Alex Jump, also an avid fisherman. "Hunters and fishermen are the original conservationists and we wanted to engage



this group in a fun activity, so they'll learn more about what we're doing in the region that protects what's important to them."

Registration is open until noon on March 11 and is \$100 per boat entry fee. Participants can also register beginning at 5 a.m. at the Ledford Chapel Boat Ramp on Lake Chatuge to receive full instructions before blasting off on a lottery-based system. Absolute cutoff for registration ends at 6:40 a.m. the morning of the tournament.

Sign up online at mainspringconserves.org/events or by calling 828-524-2711.

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Fifth-ranked Lady Indians open season with 4-0 in region play

By Jeremy Foster
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Staff Writer

The Lady Indians Soccer Team headed by Coach Clay Livingston is maintaining a great pace at the start of the season, having earned a 5-0-1 record by press time to establish an early season top-five spot in the Eurosport.com Class A-Public Girls Soccer rankings.

Towns County's girls defeated region-foe Washington-Wilkes High School 6-0 on Monday, Feb. 21, on

home turf.

Goal scorers were junior Jayden Taylor unassisted and with an assist from senior Miranda Spain, as well as junior Abby Pate assisted by Spain, Taylor assisted by senior Macy Brinson, freshman Abby Gardella assisted by freshman Kya Smith, and Brinson assisted by senior Bazya Smith.

"We had another great region win on the road against Barrow Arts and Sciences Academy, 2-0, on Saturday, Feb. 26," Livingston said, commenting on a win that

put the Lady Indians 4-0 in region play.

Goal scorers in Saturday's game were Jayden Taylor assisted by junior Sarah Shook and Spain assisted by Taylor.

Towns County's Boys Soccer is also playing well at the start of the season, having earned a 2-2 region record by press time.

Still, the Indians are awaiting players to fill the rest of team's roster at the conclusion of basketball season, which will hopefully end with a win at state.

Boys		Girls	
Academy For Classical Education (6-3-0)	1	Commerce City High School (6-0-0)	
Lake Oconee Academy (3-1-0)	2	Social Circle High School (6-1-0)	
The Dalton Academy (7-1-0)	3	Armuchee High School (1-1-0)	
Georgia Military College (5-5-0)	4	Atlanta Classical Academy (0-1-0)	
Atkinson County High School (4-1-1)	5	Towns County High School (2-0-0)	
Social Circle High School (3-1-0)	6	Lake Oconee Academy (3-3-0)	
Claxton High School (2-3-0)	7	Screven County High School (7-1-0)	
Portal High School (2-1-0)	8	Atkinson County High School (5-1-0)	
Commerce City High School (3-3-0)	9	Lincoln County High School (3-4-0)	
Dooly County High School (3-4-1)	10	Academy For Classical Education (2-6-1)	

The Lady Indians remain among the top five teams in the Eurosport.com Class A-Public rankings.



Macy Brinson (23) controls the ball as Miranda Spain provides an outlet during Towns County's victory at Barrow Arts and Sciences Academy last week. Photo/Sherri Livingston

Towns County baseball March schedule

Thu, 3/3 4:00pm		Portal Away • Non-Region
Sat, 3/5 1:00pm		Bryan County (Pembroke) Neutral • Non-Region
Mon, 3/7 4:00pm		Hiwassee Dam (Murphy, NC) Home • Non-Region
Tue, 3/8 4:00pm		Hiwassee Dam (Murphy, NC) Away • Non-Region
Fri, 3/11 5:30pm		Washington-Wilkes (Washington) Home • Region
Sat, 3/12 1:00pm		Washington-Wilkes (Washington) Away • Region
Sat, 3/12 3:30pm		Washington-Wilkes (Washington) Away • Region
Mon, 3/14 4:30pm		Copper Basin (Copperhill, TN) Away • Non-Region
Tue, 3/15 5:30pm		Social Circle Home • Region
Fri, 3/18 5:00pm		Social Circle Away • Region
Fri, 3/18 7:00pm		Social Circle Away • Region
Tue, 3/22 5:55pm		Commerce Away • Region
Fri, 3/25 5:00pm		Commerce Home • Region
Fri, 3/25 7:30pm		Commerce Home • Region
Thu, 3/31 5:30pm		Union County (Blairsville) Away • Non-Region

NASCAR 2022

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Larson gets first win of season

Kyle Larson, the defending NASCAR Cup Series champion put on a dominating performance in the closing laps of Sunday's California race to claim his first win of the season.

In a race that saw 12 cautions for 59 laps, Larson, who started from the rear of the field because of unapproved adjustments to his No. 5 Chevy, took the lead from Joey Logano on Lap 167 of 200 and held it for 27 of the final 34 circuits on the way to the victory.

But the victory didn't come easy. The last caution of the race came during lap 193 after Chase Elliott, Larson's teammate, who had been involved in an earlier incident, spun down on to the infield grass. On the restart with four laps to go, it was Larson, Daniel Suarez, Joey Logano, and Ty Dillon. Suarez and Logano raced Larson hard, and Suarez actually took the lead for about half a lap, before Larson was able to regain it.

"This being my home state, it's always good to win here," said Larson of Elk Grove, Calif. "There were a lot of fast cars there at the end. We had to keep our head in it to pull it off. I was worried about that last pass, when I went to the bottom of the track. But the way everyone was running, I knew I had to try something if I was going to get back in front."

Larson's margin of victory over Austin Dillon was just .195-seconds.

"You never like to settle for second, when you think you might be able to win," said Dillon. "We might have had a little faster car there at the end, but I wasn't able to get around the 5 car before the checkered flag. He (Larson) did a good job keeping everyone in his rear view mirror."

Erik Jones was third, then Daniel Suarez, Joey Logano, Aric Almirola, Kevin Harvick, Kurt Busch, Daniel Hemric, and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. were the remaining top 10.

Kyle Busch struggled. He was involved in two incidents. He spun on lap 81 after a tire went down, and had to pit under green. He lost one lap, but was able to make up and finish 14th.

Tyler Reddick won the first two stages of the race, and appeared to have the dominant car until he had a left rear tire go flat, and William Byron came up the track and pushed him into the wall. Both his No. 8 and Byron's No. 24 had to be towed back to the pits. Repairs were made to his car and he finished 24th, one lap down.

Brad Keselowski continues to struggle with the new Next Gen car. He was involved in several mishaps during the Daytona 500, and was not able to finish it. This past Sunday he had handling problems with his No. 6 Ford, and was involved in three separate incidents and spins before being taken out of the race after Bubba Wallace got into the back of him, relegating him to a 27th place finish.

Top 10 leaders after 2 of 36: 1. Cindric-85, 2. Logano-77, 3. Truex Jr.-73, 4. Blaney-70, 5. Briscoe-69, 6. Jones-68, 7. Almirola-66, 8. Larson-65, 9. Wallace-65, 10. Keselowski-64.

CUSTER WINS CALIFORNIA XFINITY RACE

Cole Custer survived three overtimes, 12 cautions and more than three hours of official racing to win Saturday's Xfinity Series race at Fontana, beating runner-up Noah Gragson to the finish line by .565 seconds.

It was a long day's journey into night, a race that started in mid-afternoon and unexpectedly ended under the lights. The three overtimes extended the event 15 laps beyond its scheduled distance of 150 circuits at the 2-mile track.

Trevor Bayne, Josh Berry, Anthony Alfredo, Sam Mayer, AJ Allmendinger, Justin Allgaier, Riley Herbst, and Ryan Sieg were the remaining top 10 finishers.



Kyle Larson celebrates with his team.

Top 10 leaders after 2 of 33: 1. Allmendinger-90, 2. Gragson-89, 3. Allgaier-87, 4. Herbst-71, 5. Sieg-71, 6. Gibbs-71, 7. Berry-63, 8. Alfredo-62, 9. Hemric-61, 10. B. Brown-60.

NASCAR ON AN UPSWING

Sunday's NASCAR Daytona 500 averaged a 4.7 rating and 8.87 million viewers on FOX (8.88M across all platforms), marking the highest rated and most-watched edition of the race since 2019 (5.3, 9.17M).

Ratings jumped 68 percent and viewership 81 percent from last year's all-time lows of 2.8 and 4.91 million and 7 and 21 percent respectively from two years ago (4.4, 7.33M). Keep in mind both of those races were severely affected by rain, the former finishing after midnight ET (the latest ending in 500 history) and the latter primarily run on a Monday.

Despite the historically low numbers, Sunday's race was the most-watched single network sportscast of the entire week topping all of NBC's primetime Olympics windows and the NBA All-Star Game. It dominated competing Olympics coverage head-to-head Sunday afternoon (1.4, 2.26M).

Last Sunday's Daytona 500 was the first time a full field of 40 Next Gen cars appeared on the track in racing conditions.

The racing was fairly typical of most superspeedway races, with several multi-car wrecks, but the carbon-fiber composite bodies appeared to stand up better in accidents.

"The car allowed the drivers to put on a great race today, and we saw a great deal of promise for the future," said Steve O'Donnell, NASCAR's executive vice president.

"Cars were able to finish the race with damage that would have typically sent them to the garage in previous years. The incidents on track did not lead to lengthy cleanups due to oil or excessive debris on the track which was a definite positive. Each track will present new challenges.

"We certainly came away with some items we want to review and improve upon. Overall, a very positive first points race for the Next Gen car."

Two cars suffered lost wheels during the race and several cars seemed to have difficulty driving away from accidents with flat tires, but overall, drivers seemed pleased with the performance and handling.

Meanwhile, Hendrick Motorsports and driver Chase Elliott have signed a five-year contract extension that will keep the 2020 NASCAR Cup Series champion with the No. 9 team through the end of the 2027 racing season.

Elliott, 26, has never missed the Cup Series playoffs in his six full seasons at NASCAR's top level. The Dawsonville, Georgia, native earned rookie of the year honors in 2016 and secured his first Cup title in 2020. He has already won 13 career points-paying races, including two in 2021 when he appeared in the Championship 4 for the second consecutive season.

signed with Hendrick Motorsports as a 15-year-old high school freshman and has since been successful at every level of competition. He won his first NASCAR national series title in 2014 (Xfinity Series) and is now a second-generation Cup Series champion, following his father, NASCAR Hall of Famer Bill Elliott, who earned the top honor in 1988.

Racing Joke: One afternoon, a young racer came home from the race shop, and his wife met him at the door.

"I'm worried about our son's eating habits," she said. "All day he has been laying in bed and eating yeast and car wax. What will happen to him?"

"He will rise and shine," the husband said.

Weekend Racing: It's a full schedule this weekend at Las Vegas for all three of NASCAR's major series: Fri., Mar. 4; Truck Series race 2 of 23; Starting time: 9 p.m. ET; TV: FoxSports1. Sat., Mar. 5; Xfinity Series race 3 of 33; Starting time: 4:30 p.m. ET; TV: FoxSports1. Sun., Mar. 6; Cup Series race 3 of 36; Starting time: 3:30 p.m. ET; TV: Fox.

Racing Trivia Question: Which team and series does Trevor Bayne, winner of the 2011 Daytona 500 drive for this year?

Last Week's Question: Which Cup Series team will Kurt Busch drive for this season? Answer: Busch drives the No. 45 Toyota for 23XI race team.

Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter is a syndicated NASCAR writer and author. You may e-mail him at hodges@race500.com.

Benton MacKaye Trail Association March hikes

The current social distancing and health rules are used by hike Leaders.

March 4th (Friday): Benton MacKaye Trail Association sponsors a moderate, 4 mile hike to Buck Bald on the BMT trail from TN Hwy 68 and road walk to Buck Bald & Return. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact HikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

March 7th (Monday): Benton MacKaye Trail Association sponsors a strenuous 10 mile hike on the BMT to Walallah Mountain: GA Hwy 60 from Skenah Creek to intersection with Duncan Ridge Trail & Return. Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact HikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

March 14th (Monday): Benton MacKaye Trail Association sponsors a moderate to strenuous 8.3 mile hike on the BMT Hemp Top, Jacks River trails. We will start hiking from Watson Gap, enter the Cohutta Wilderness on the BMT, Hike leaders Carolyn and Tom Sewell. For more information, contact hikeleaderCS@bmtamail.org.