

# Towns County Sports

*Towns County's Leader In Sports*

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## Soccer: Indians to visit Metter in the Round of 8

**By Todd Forrest  
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**Cussetta** - Towns County (18-2) scored a 3-0 victory over Chattahoochee County (9-9) in last Wednesday's Sweet 16 round, securing a spot in this week's Elite Eight.

The Indians earned a spot among the final eight courtesy of two second half goals, pulling away from a 1-0 halftime edge.

Towns County attempted 26 shots in the win with Caden Coggins, Tucker Engert and Cruz Kitchens each finding the net. Coggins, Kitchens and Connor Williams chipped in an assist.

Keeper Dustin Barrett stopped six shot attempts.

Towns County travels to Metter on Tuesday, May 6 at 6 p.m. The Tigers enter the Elite Eight as the Area 3 champions and sporting a 14-1 record.

Metter is led by freshman forward Anthony Benitez and his 32 goals. Senior Jonatan Elizalde is second on the team with 24 goals while logging a team-high 38 assists on the year.

Sophomore keeper Daniel Silva has collected three clean sheets in 2025.

Metter punched its ticket to the Elite Eight via a first-round bye and a 5-0 victory over Irwin County in the Sweet 16. Benitez scored twice and Elizalde dished out three assists vs. Irwin County.

In the final Class A (D2) rankings before the postseason, Metter sat at No. 2 while Towns County was ninth.

Last month, Towns County knocked off Elite Scholars Academy 4-3 in the first round, courtesy of two goals from Engert, and one apiece by Williams and Kitchens.



Sophomore Jordan Lopez (8) during the win over Elite Scholars Academy. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

## Young Harris College Baseball Playoff Bound; Spring Sports Wrap Up with Honors and Heart

Things are slowing down here in the Enchanted Valley, as a few more seasons wrap up and awards continue to pour in – however, we are all cheering on YH Baseball as their postseason endeavors are just getting started.

After strong playoff performances, both the Women's Lacrosse and Men's Tennis seasons come to a close. The Lady Mountain Lions lost a tough battle with Belmont Abbey College, falling short with a final score of 15-9 on April 26. YH played behind the eight ball for the majority of the first half and fell behind 8-2 midway through the second period. They clawed their way back but ultimately could not catch up to the Crusaders. Sydney Craig (2), Brooklyn Kiest (2), Ashlyn Fraley (2), Riley Parker (2), and Addison Heiser (1) all found the back of the net. Mary Troyer dished out a game-high five assists and recorded three draw controls.

The YH Men's Tennis team battled the Patriots of Francis Marion University in the Conference Carolinas Tournament Quarterfinals at the Palmetto Tennis Center on April 25. As they fought hard throughout doubles and singles play, and pushed multiple matches to three sets, they ultimately fell 4-2 to FMU. In singles, Noah Pawirodirjo delivered a gritty three-set win at No. 2 in singles (6-1, 3-6, 7-5) to get the Mountain Lions on the board. Samuel Guzon stayed locked in for YH at the No. 5 slot, winning his match in straight sets (6-3, 6-4).

In the Track & Field world, Young Harris capped off the inaugural outdoor season with breakout performances at the conference championships. In the final event of the year, YH turned in multiple standout performances and continued to build momentum for the future of the program. The men's team finished 10th overall, while Ryland Hunley earned a second-place overall finish in the decathlon and secured second-team All-Conference honors. The women battled hard throughout the weekend and notched some personal bests. Brynley Walraven finished fourth in the women's 800M after running a personal best in the prelims, scoring the team five points.

Young Harris Baseball closed out their last regular season series with a road victory against Emmanuel University April 25-26. In games won with small ball and the



long ball, Young Harris Baseball continues to find ways to win as they collectively tallied 25 runs over the weekend, while giving up 12. Several Mountain Lions left this series with multi-hit performances. One player to highlight is senior Mark Castle, who finished 3-for-5 with a run scored, a double, and five RBI in game one. Then, he was 1-for-3 with a three-run home run in the Saturday finale.

As announced by Conference Carolinas on April 26, Young Harris Baseball was named Co-Champion of the conference with Francis Marion University. For seeding purposes, YH will be slotted at No. 2, due to the Patriots having the upper hand in head-to-head play this season. The Mountain Lions have had one impressive year, wrapping up the regular season with an astounding 37-13 overall record and 22-8 record in Conference Carolinas – the toughest conference for baseball across NCAA

Division II. Additionally, the program had eight athletes receive All-Conference honors. Drew Bray (Third Base – First Team), Luke Hatcher (Outfield – First Team), Graham Edwards (Pitcher – First Team), Jeremy Begora (Utility – First Team), Jonny Smith (Second Base – Second Team), Kade Smallwood (Designated Hitter – Second Team), Zach Hart (Pitcher – Second Team), and Austin Ritchie (Pitcher – Second Team). The eight selections cap off a historic season for Young Harris, as the Mountain Lions captured a share of the Conference Carolinas regular season crown for the first time in program history.

Lastly, YH Athletics wants to share an update from the conclusion of the MLC auction. Associate Director of Athletics for External Operations, Maddie Urquiola, shares:

“As our inaugural MLC auction ends, we are filled with immense gratitude and pride in what we have accomplished to-



Cruz Kitchens attempts a shot during the first round of the playoffs. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

## YHC Baseball named 2025 Conference Co-champions

Young Harris Baseball has been named Co-Champion of Conference Carolinas with Francis Marion University, wrapping up the regular season with a 37-13 overall record, 22-8 in Conference Carolinas, one of the toughest NCAA Division II baseball conferences.

“I am very proud of our program!” said Head Coach Stephen Waggenger. “Our guys have been resilient all year and have succeeded in completing a rigorous conference schedule, and were able to finish at the top of the conference standings. Conference Carolinas has had seven different teams ranked in the top 25 this season.”

It's been an impressive season for the Mountain Lions, as the squad has had several notable streaks/records. During the season, they won 10 of 11 three-game series played, four of which were sweeps and included victories over formerly top-ranked North Greenville University and Mount Olive University. YHC held an incredible 13-2 midweek record, falling only to Mars Hill and Tusculum University.

Throughout the 50 regular-season games, the team's season-high number of runs scored in a game was 22 against King University on

gether. Thanks to the generosity, enthusiasm, and unwavering support of our community, we successfully raised over \$20,000, which will all go towards student-athlete scholarships – an investment not only in athletics, but in the academic and personal futures of young individuals who exemplify



YHC Baseball named 2025 co-champion of Conference Carolinas

April 5. And while being efficient at the plate, the Mountain Lions were successful on the mound as well, pitching six shutouts.

The run-scoring came from all parts of the lineup this year, with a few standouts, including senior first baseman Jeremy Begora. He currently leads the conference in home runs (19) and in runs scored (66). Begora is fourth in Conference Carolinas with a .687 slugging percentage. Luke Hatcher leads the conference in RBI (65), doubles (28), and slugging percentage (.713).

The Young Harris pitching staff has held their ground all season, led by Zach Hart, who finished the regular sea-

son 8-3 with a 3.94 earned run average. Austin Ritchie wrapped up the regular season 9-2 with a 3.50 ERA and 44 strikeouts. Senior Graham Edwards posted a season 3.06 ERA (No. 5 in the conference) and held opposing batters to a .230 batting average (also No. 5 in the conference). Coming out of the bullpen, Brady Caloway has a .94 WHIP (walks and hits in innings pitched) with a 2.65 ERA this season in 37.1 innings of relief, holding batters to a .215 batting average.

The Mountain Lions await a postseason schedule from Conference Carolinas to continue their remarkable 2025 season.

but for a cause that touches lives in meaningful ways. Every contribution, big or small, helped move us toward our goal of making higher education more accessible for dedicated student-athletes who strive to excel both on the field and in the classroom.”

perseverance, teamwork, and excellence. This year's online auction exceeded our expectations, bringing together alumni, parents, faculty, local businesses, and friends from across the country. Bidders competed with (Mountain Lion Purple) heart, not just for the exciting items and experiences offered,