

Towns County Sports

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Lady Indians defeat Copper Basin and Union, take third in BOTS

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The Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Basketball Team took a decisive opening night victory over Copper Basin in the twenty fifth annual Battle of the States Tournament last week and fell victim to a decisive victory by tournament champion Lumpkin County on Friday before rebounding for a hard fought victory over Union County on Saturday in taking the third place trophy.

The week's work leaves the Lady Indians with a 6-7 record against a very challenging schedule as they face mostly Region 8A opponents during the 2019 portion of their schedule with a trip to Hayesville on Saturday of this week and a home court battle with Fannin County later this month being the only non-region games remaining on their schedule.

Lady Indians 58, Copper Basin (Tennessee) 33 – The Lady Indians entered the game against Copper Basin feeling most richly blessed by the fact that senior Taylor Cornett was available and unexpectedly ready to play after a serious auto accident the day before the game when her car was totaled by a head on collision.

The Copper Basin Lady Cougars entered the opening game against the Lady Indians with a 6-4 record and got off to a 6-2 start by the 4:51 mark of the first quarter only to see the Lady Indians strike for a 15-2 run for a 17-8 score which became 17-10 at quarter's end. Sophomores Kennedy Henson with seven points and Vanessa Floyd with six highlighted first quarter action for the Lady Indians who led 32-12 at intermission and 49-20 after three quarters on the way to a 58-33 victory.

Scoring highlights for the final three quarters included seven players entering the scoring column in the second quarter with Floyd and Henson again leading the way with four points each, six points on three deuces by senior Demya Allen and treys by Cornett and junior Sophia Shook in the third, and nine points on three treys by sophomore Jayce Young in the fourth.

Scoring leaders for the game for the Lady Indians were Floyd with 12 points, Henson and Young with 11 each, Allen with 9, Cornett with 7, and Shook with 5. Seven different Lady Indians contributed at least one assist with leaders being Henson with 4, Cornett with 3, and sophomore Remington Parker and Shook with 2 each.

Leading rebounders were Allen with 7, Henson with 6, Floyd with 5, sophomore Abby Mauldin with 4, and Cornett with 3. Junior Hailey Brackett led Copper Basin with 10 points.

Lumpkin County 56, Lady Indians 17 – For the second time this year, the Lady Indians faced a very difficult matchup when they faced the Class AAA Lumpkin County Lady Indians of Dahlonega who feature outstanding defense, athleticism, and outside shooting but especially strong ball handling which makes the Lady Indians' all over the court pressure defense more difficult.

At any rate, the Lumpkin Ladies sprang out to a 14-0 lead and led at the quarter breaks by scores of 21-3, 36-11, and 49-17 on the way to a 56-17 victory. This is a season when viewing scores of various games have given false expectations related to the outcomes of upcoming games such as a comparison of scores between the Lady Indians, Lumpkin County, and Fannin County. It is interesting to note that the Fannin County Lady Rebels traveled to Lumpkin County where they won by a 56-48 score and two games later hosted the Lady Indians in Blue Ridge and took a 46-38 win by the same margin as their win at Lumpkin. And who could have expected the Lumpkin County boys team to lose to Walhalla, South Carolina, by a 78-24 score in the Battle of the States championship game based on scores of various games?

Sophomores contributed all of the Lady Indians points



The Towns County Lady Indians with their third place trophy after winning two-of-three games last week at the 25th Annual Battle of the States Christmas Tournament. Photos by Lowell Nicholson

in the Lumpkin County game with Kennedy Henson sinking four treys for 12 points, Vanessa Floyd a trey for 3, and Jayce Young a long deuce for 2. Seniors Kristen Byers and Taylor Cornett, junior Sophia Shook, and Floyd and Henson each contributed 1 assist according to your reporter's unofficial tally. Leading in rebounds were Henson with 5, Byers and Shook with 4 each, and sophomore Abby Mauldin with 3.

Scoring leaders for Lumpkin were senior Mackenzie Pulley with 15 points, sophomore Makenzie Caldwell with 12, and senior Clara White with 10. The Lumpkin Ladies opened the tournament by racing past Hayesville by a 61-43 score after trailing 34-31 at halftime and completed the tournament with a 57-53 win over Murphy in winning the championship on Saturday. They have a gaudy 13-3 record as they enter the 2019 portion of their season.

Lady Indians 52, Union County 48 – The third game turned out to be the charm for the Lady Indians when they faced the Union County Lady Panthers in the battle for third place in the Battle of the States Tournament. They had held a 27-26 lead through three quarters at Union County back in November before ice cold fourth quarter shooting contributed heavily to the Lady Panthers pulling away for a 43-31 victory.

And in the return match just twelve days prior to this game, the Lady Indians couldn't provide much resistance with six players beset with illness, including one who missed the entire game and two starters who were able to play only briefly before departing with the Lady Panthers taking a 51-38 victory not as close as the final score would indicate.

Sophomore Kennedy Henson got the Lady Indians off to a 3-0 lead less than a minute into the game but the Lady Panthers gave some indication that they might be taking control with a 9-3 lead on four for four free throw shooting, a deuce, and a trey at the 4:39 mark but two treys by Henson and one by senior Taylor Cornett more than matched a trey by the Lady Panthers during the final 4:27 as the two teams were deadlocked at 12-12 after one quarter.

The Lady Panthers sandwiched a trey and a deuce around two free throws by Lady Indian junior Sophia Shook for a 17-14 Union lead at the 7:01 mark of the second quarter but the Lady Panthers endured a long dry spell after that, failing to sink another field goal until the 3:21 mark of the third quarter.

The Lady Panthers did add a free throw at 5:56 of the second quarter for an 18-14 lead but the Lady Indians embarked on a 16-3 run for a 30-21 lead at the 4:50 mark of the third quarter. The stunning Lady Indian run was

accomplished by a trey and four for four free throw shooting for seven points by Henson, a deuce and two for two free throw shooting for four points by sophomore Vanessa Floyd, a trey for three points by Shook, and a deuce for two by Cornett.

The Lady Panthers would include two treys in their own 8-2 run the remainder of the quarter, however, for just a 32-29 deficit entering the fourth quarter. The Lady Indians would bend but never break by coming up with big plays and accurate free throw shooting in the fourth quarter in answering each challenge by the Lady Panthers.

Treys by Henson and Cornett wrapped around a drive for two points by Union had the Lady Indians leading 38-31 at the 5:24 mark but a deuce and three point play got the Lady Panthers within 38-36 and they went to the foul line for two shots and a chance for a tie at the 3:50 mark. Both shots were made but the Lady Indians got a big break when a lane violation nullified the second with the Towns Ladies clinging to a 38-37 lead.

Henson sank a trey at 3:09 for a 41-37 Towns lead only to have Union match it at 2:18 for just a 41-40 Lady Indian lead. The Lady Indians were up to the task at hand, however, as Henson drove to the basket for a deuce at 1:56 and senior Kristen Byers sank two clutch free throws at 1:25 for a 45-40 Towns lead.

The Lady Panthers responded with two free throws of their own just nine seconds later for a 45-42 score but Henson made a three point play on an inbounds pass from Cornett at 1:11 for a 48-42 Towns lead.

Two more free throws by the Lady Panthers at 58.8 got them within 48-44 with a free throw by Cornett at 56.4 matched by one by Union at 32.2 for a 49-45 score. Floyd followed by sinking two pressure free throws at 29.6 and Henson one of two at 11.3 seconds for a 52-45 Towns lead that became a 52-48 victory when Union sank a trey as time expired.

When the dust had cleared, Henson had included six treys and six for seven free throw shooting in a career high 30 points performance with other scoring leaders being Cornett with 9 points, Floyd with 6, and Shook with 5. Byers and Cornett led in assists with 2 each while eight different Lady Indians contributed at least one rebound with leaders being Henson with 12 and Floyd and Shook with 4 each.

Not only was the score of the game close but also the manners in which the points were scored as the Lady Indians sank five deuces and nine treys compared to six deuces and seven treys by the Lady Panthers. At the foul line, the stats were about as close as they could get with the Lady Indians sinking fifteen of twenty attempts and

the Lady Panthers fifteen of twenty one.

This report would not be complete without recognizing the team defensive effort which is so crucial to the success the Lady Indians have accomplished this year. They usually face taller and more physical opponents as is the case with Union with a need to disrupt the offensive plans of their opponents and although points are of great importance and the only consistently retained statistics through the years, a defensive play preventing a basket by an opponent is just as important as the scoring of a basket as related to who wins a game.

With this in mind, kudos are extended not only to the players already mentioned above for their defensive contributions but seniors Demya Allen and Kenzlee Denton and sophomores Abby Mauldin and Jayce Young. And best wishes are extended to senior defensive specialist and three point shooter Erika Spano who is sidelined by injury but hopes to return to the team prior to the end of the season.

Eight different Lady Panthers entered the scoring column in this game with leaders being juniors Andeline Hill and Kait McCarter and freshman Ava Hunter with 9 points each. The Lady Panthers have an impressive 8-4 record, including 2-1 in their Region 8AA as they enter the 2019 portion of their season.

From December 20
Lady Indians 32, Hiwassee Dam 29 – An often used description of there being a lid on the basket applied for

both teams throughout the game at Hiwassee Dam but this was especially true the first half for Hiwassee Dam and for the Lady Indians during more than ten minutes of playing time at the end of the game with shot after shot appearing certain to fall in the basket but finding a way to roll or bounce off the rim.

The Lady Indians managed to sink three first quarter field goals on a steal and layup by senior Taylor Cornett at the 4:07 mark, a trey by sophomore Vanessa Floyd at 3:05, and a drive for two points by senior Kristen Byers at fifty seconds for a 7-2 lead at quarter's end.

Byers then drove the base line for a second field goal and a 9-2 Towns lead at 7:07 of the second quarter with the two teams playing on pretty much even terms the remainder of the quarter with five different Lady Indians entering the scoring column and the Lady Indians leading 19-10 at intermission. The Lady Eagles managed just three field goals, which can certainly be attributed partially to effective defense by the Lady Indians but also due to the lid on the basket as described earlier, and four for four free throw shooting in accumulating their ten points for the half.

The Lady Indians got their biggest lead of 21-10 on a steal near mid court and resulting layup by Cornett less than a minute into the third quarter and they led 25-15 at the 3:40 mark after a putback basket by sophomore Kennedy Henson and two free throws by senior Kenzlee Denton. Following a trey and deuce by the Lady Eagles, they trailed by just a

25-20 score at 2:59 but a trey by Henson and a free throw by senior Demya Allen had the Lady Indians ahead 29-20 at the 2:06 mark and seemingly on their way to a comfortable victory.

The Lady Indians' shooting went stone cold after that, however, with a deuce and trey by Hiwassee Dam getting the Eagles within 29-25 with fifty five seconds on the clock but two free throws by Allen at 2.5 seconds gave the impression that the Indians might be regaining control of the game with a 31-25 lead entering the fourth quarter.

This would not be the case, however, as an ultra low scoring fourth quarter was upcoming with the Lady Eagles sinking deuces at the 4:51 and 1:33 marks for just a 31-29 Lady Indians lead.

The Lady Indians sank just one of three one and one free throw attempts during the final 1:12 of the game but one by Henson at 22.3 seconds set the final score at 32-29 when a trey attempt by the Lady Eagles for a tie near the five seconds mark missed and the Lady Indians corraled the rebound and ran out the clock for the victory.

Leaders in scoring for the game for the Lady Indians were Henson with 9 points, Floyd with 6, Allen with 5, and Byers and Cornett with 4 each while Cornett, Denton, and junior Sophia Shook contributed 1 assist each. Leading in rebounds were Allen with 8 and Floyd and Henson with 5 each. Britany Davis led Hiwassee Dam in scoring with 12 points.



Towns County sophomore Kennedy Henson was named All Tournament following Saturday's Battle of the States finale. Photo/Lowell Nicholson