

Towns County Sports

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Indians get important Region wins vs Commerce, Athens Academy

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County High School Indians varsity basketball team, still playing without the services of senior inside power player Logan Cowart, opened the 2018 portion of their season in style last weekend when they traveled to Commerce on Friday and returned home on Saturday to take on Athens Academy in important Region 8-A contests.

Cowart has reported that his injured foot is improving with further evaluation coming up during a doctor's appointment on January 17. The Indians improved their overall record to 9-5 and their region record to 4-1 with a closer than might have been expected 66-59 victory at Commerce and an explosive last half in taking a 71-56 victory over Athens Academy.

Commerce entered the game against the Indians with just a 2-9 record but on a bit of an upswing after their two most recent prior games with just a 54-47 home court loss to region foe Athens Christian and a 78-60 triumph at Class AAA Jackson County.

They then followed their very competitive loss to the Indians by falling by just a 72-71 score at region foe George Walton Academy on Saturday night.

Athens Academy entered the Saturday night game against the Indians with a 5-5 record but with four of the five losses being by just one or two points and the other by just a 72-61 score at highly regarded region foe Lakeview Academy.

Indians 66, Commerce 59 – The Indians appeared to be taking control of the game at Commerce when two field goals by senior Evan Berrong gave them 2-0 and 4-3 leads on the way to a 19-5 advantage by just the 3:19 mark of the first quarter and a whopping 24-8 lead at 2:12. Senior Zach Davenport provided nine points, Berrong eight, and junior Will Travis seven during the stunning Indians scoring run.

At that 2:12 point, however, it appeared that the home



The Indians picked up a pair of region wins last week at Commerce and at home vs Athens Academy. Photos by Lowell Nicholson

standing Tigers applied a lid to the Indians basket as good shots refused to fall except for well spaced baskets by Travis and Davenport as the only points scored by the Indians during a 20-4 Commerce run for a 28-28 tie at the 1:40 mark of the second quarter.

A trey by junior Trent Bradshaw at fifty four seconds got the Indians a 31-28 lead which became 31-30 at intermission.

The Indians followed a quick third quarter Commerce deuce for a 32-31 Tigers lead with a trey and deuce by Bradshaw and a coast to coast run by freshman Kolby Moss for a 38-32 Towns lead at 6:04 but a Tiger trey just ten seconds later got them off on a 12-2 run for a 44-40 lead at 1:10.

The Indians finished the third quarter on a 6-2 run on two deuces by Davenport and one by Moss for a 46-46 tie entering the fourth quarter. Two Tiger free throws just thirteen seconds into the fourth quarter got them what would turn out to be their last lead of 48-46 as pull up jumpers by Moss and Bradshaw got the Indians ahead

for good by a 50-48 score but not without continuing challenges until near the end of the game.

A tip in and two free throws by Davenport gave the Indians four points leads at 6:30 and 4:55 and a field goal by Travis at 3:05 and a steal and coast to coast run by Berrong seemed to give the Indians some breathing room with a 58-52 lead at 2:53. But a trey and steal for two points had the Tigers within 58-57 at 2:24.

The Indians struck for seven straight points after that, however, on a baseline runner by Travis, three for four free throw shooting by Davenport, and a Bradshaw put back basket for a 65-57 Indians lead at 29.3 seconds and an eventual hard fought 66-59 victory.

Davenport led the Indians in scoring for the game with 22 points and was followed by Bradshaw with 14, Travis with 13, Berrong with 10, and Moss with 7 while Davenport also led in assists with 4 and was followed by Berrong and Moss with 3 each and Travis with 2. Leaders in rebounds were Travis with 13, Davenport with



10, Moss with 9, and Bradshaw with 4.

The Tigers were led in scoring by junior Jalen Dorsey with 13 points and the trio of senior Kyre Ware, junior Chandler Martin, and freshman Creed Dunbar with 11 each.

Indians 71, Athens Academy 56 – There were two ties and six lead changes in the first quarter of the Indians game against Athens Academy with two treys by junior Trent Bradshaw giving the Indians 3-2 and 6-5 leads which were followed by deuces by freshman Kolby Moss and junior Brett Denton giving them leads of 8-7 and 11-9 but with the visiting Spartans leading 14-12 by quarter's end.

The Spartans maintained their lead in the second quarter with the exception of a 20-19 Indians lead on a field goal by senior Zach Davenport at the 3:02 mark and the Spartans lead was 28-23 at the halftime break.

Freshman Kolby Moss struck for a trey and put back basket in less than a minute at the start of the third quarter for a 28-28 tie and a second trey by

Moss at 5:41 got the Indians a 31-28 lead.

The Spartans sank a trey of their own at 5:17 for a 31-31 tie before a trey by junior Will Travis at 4:38 triggered a 21-6 Indians scoring run by the twenty six seconds mark for a 52-37 Towns lead which became 52-40 entering the fourth quarter.

Davenport scored twelve points and Moss added his third trey of the quarter for eleven points in leading an overall 29-12 third quarter scoring surge.

The Spartans had finished the third quarter with a three points play and continued for a 10-2 overall scoring run for just a 54-47 deficit with 6:44 left but the Indians finished the game on a 17-9 surge for a 71-56 victory. Five different Indians put points on the scoreboard in the fourth quarter with Davenport leading with nine and Travis following with four. Overall, the Indians outscored the Spartans 48-28 in their explosive last half.

Scoring leaders for the Indians were Davenport with 28 points, Moss with 15, Bradshaw with 10, and Travis with

9. Leaders in assists were Bradshaw with 5, Davenport with 4, and seniors Bradley Benson and Evan Berrong with 3 each while Travis led in rebounds with 7 and was followed by Moss with 6 and Davenport with 5.

The Spartans were led in scoring by juniors Matt Marvel and Barrett McClanahan with 14 and 13 points and 6'6" freshman Hugh Laughlin with 10.

Indians versus Hokes Bluff Addendum – With limited time, before going out of town for three days, to write the Battle of the States reports, your reporter realized too late for submitting to the newspaper that a portion of the already very lengthy Indians versus Hokes Bluff report was incomplete.

With your reporter hearing on occasion from players from decades ago that they still have articles written by your reporter about their games, a few additions will be provided here for those who want, more likely in the future than now, to see complete information about that game.

Details about the first half of the game were provided but without referring to any of the scores during the half.

With seven ties and nine lead changes, there were never any leads larger than three points on one occasion in the first quarter and two in the second by Hokes Bluff until the Indians scored the final seven points of the second quarter for a 33-28 lead at intermission after the Eagles led 15-14 after one quarter.

The information provided here will likely be of little interest to most readers but it does serve to provide more complete information for anyone who wish to have it for future reference.

TCHS BASKETBALL SCHEDULING ALERT: The snow delayed Towns County home games against Lakeview Academy scheduled for this Saturday, January 13, will be played earlier than the usual Saturday starting times with the JV games beginning at 1 p.m. and the varsity games beginning at 4 p.m.

Henson lost for season, Towns impressive in losses to Commerce, Athens Academy

By Jerry Kendall
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Staff Writer

The news was not good for the Towns County High School Lady Indians varsity basketball team when results were received concerning a knee injury sustained by freshman standout Kennedy Henson in their semi final game against Hokes Bluff, Alabama, in the Battle of the States Tournament.

Henson suffered a dreaded torn ACL with surgery and a lengthy recovery period required, bringing an end to a season when she scored 143 points in eleven games for a 13.0 points per game scoring average.

This is the highest scoring average on record for a freshman Lady Indian or Indian with incomplete but vast records available as far back as 1952.

The highest known prior scoring average for a Lady Indian freshman is 12.1 points per game in 1983 by Amy Allen Silvey, who missed six early season games due to a stress fracture in her foot, with the highest known average for an Indian being 9.0 points per game for Bob Bryson in 1953 with Dallas Manus right behind at 8.8 in 2012.

Henson's injury came at a time when the Lady Indians appeared poised to be very competitive in Region 8A play. They had gotten off to a 2-0 start in region games played prior to Christmas and increasing success against a quite challenging schedule against mostly much larger public schools had been very evident as the season progressed.

But life goes on in spite of misfortune and, in your reporter's view, it would be hard to imagine greater competitiveness than that displayed by the Lady Indians in last weekend's games at Commerce on Friday and against Athens Academy at home on Saturday in view of not only Henson's absence but additional health issues as well.

In addition to Henson's injury, junior Kenzlee Denton was sidelined by illness and missed both games while sophomore Sophia Shook played valiantly



The shorthanded Lady Indians were unable to get over the hump late at Commerce and vs Athens Academy. Photos by Lowell Nicholson

while handicapped by painful shin splints. Nevertheless, the Lady Indians took both of their opponents down to the final minute of play before falling to defeat. Their performance against Athens Academy was especially remarkable as the Lady Spartans entered their game against the Lady Indians with a sparkling 11-2 record with just one decisive loss at Stratford Academy in Macon and just a 61-51 loss at highly regarded region foe Lakeview Academy.

Commerce 61, Lady Indians 50 – The Lady Indians actually got off to an awesome start at Commerce as they followed a trey by the Lady Tigers less than a minute into the game for a 3-0 deficit with a spectacular 19-0 run between the 6:24 and 2:10 marks of the first quarter for a 19-3 lead. Junior Erika Spano started the run with a game tying trey and senior Madison McClure got the Lady Indians a 6-3 lead with a trey just thirty six seconds later. McClure and Spano each added a second trey and freshman Vanessa Floyd sank three deuces for six points for each player during the run.

The Lady Tigers finished the quarter on a 7-0 run of their

own in reducing the Towns advantage to 19-10 but Taylor Cornett wrapped a pair of treys around a Commerce deuce in less than a minute at the start of the second quarter for a stunning 25-12 Lady Indians advantage less than nine minutes into the game. The Lady Tigers would then follow, however, with a 14-0 run for a 26-25 lead at 1:13.

By intermission, two free throws by McClure got the Lady Indians a 27-26 lead and a Sophia Shook trey at twenty seconds matched a trey twenty seconds prior by the Lady Tigers for a 30-29 Towns lead at the halftime break.

The Lady Tigers struck for the first nine points of the third quarter for a 38-30 lead at 5:07 but the Lady Indians refused to go away, responding with strong play throughout the remainder of the game. A three point play by Floyd, two free throws each by Shook and McClure, and a field goal by Shook had the Lady Indians within 42-39 by the fifty two seconds mark of the third quarter.

Once again, the Lady Tigers struck back with the final six points of the quarter and the



first five of the fourth for what appeared to be a comfortable lead of 53-39 with 7:01 left in the game but no one informed the Lady Indians of this possibility. They struck back for eight straight points on a trey by McClure, a deuce by Shook, and three for four free throw shooting by McClure for just a 53-47 deficit at the 4:04 mark.

The Lady Indians then followed a Commerce deuce for the Lady Tigers' only points in more than six minutes of playing time with a deuce by Cornett and a free throw by McClure at 49.9 seconds for an overall 11-2 run and just a 55-50 deficit and just a trey and deuce separating them from a tie. They would not be able to put additional points on the scoreboard, however, and the Lady Tigers wrapped a pair of breakaway layups around two free throws in taking the victory by a bit deceptive 61-50 score when considering the competitiveness of the game.

McClure led the Lady Indians in scoring for the game with 17 points and was followed by Shook with 10, Floyd with 9, Cornett with 8, and Spano with 6 while McClure also led in as-

ists with 3 and was followed by Cornett and Floyd with 2 each. Leaders in rebounds were McClure with 8, Floyd with 5, and the trio of junior Kristen Byers, Shook, and Spano with 3 each. The Lady Tigers completed the week with an overall 6-9 record, including 2-2 in Region 8A following a 31-30 loss at George Walton Academy on Saturday night.

Athens Academy 46, Lady Indians 43 – Athens Academy got off to a 6-1 start with the Lady Indians pulling to within 6-5 on drives for deuces by juniors Erika Spano and Kristen Byers by the 2:25 mark of the first quarter and Spano's second drive for two having them within 10-7 at 1:21 and 12-7 at quarter's end.

The Lady Spartans opened the second quarter with a pair of deuces for a 16-7 advantage at 6:42 but here came the Lady Indians with a 9-0 run highlighted by three deuces for six points by freshman Vanessa Floyd and a steal and field goal and two assists by junior Taylor Cornett for a 16-16 standoff. Two Athens field goals were followed by two free throws by senior Madison McClure at 37.4 seconds for just

a 20-18 Lady Spartans lead at intermission.

A quick trey by McClure at 7:36 of the third quarter gave the Lady Indians a 21-20 lead before a long dry spell by the Lady Indians enabled the Lady Spartans to use an 8-0 run for a 28-21 lead at 3:43. A field goal by Floyd at 2:10 and a trey by Cornett at 1:46 got the Lady Indians within 28-26 but a free throw and deuce had Athens leading 31-26 entering the fourth quarter.

The first half of the fourth quarter found the Lady Indians matching deuces by the Lady Spartans on four different occasions as they closed to within five points each time on baskets by McClure, Cornett, and Byers and two free throws by Floyd for a 39-34 score at the 4:33 mark. The Lady Spartans sank four free throws for a 43-34 lead by 2:48 but seven straight points on deuces by McClure and Floyd and a trey by Cornett between the 1:58 and forty one seconds mark had the Lady Indians knocking on the door with just a 43-41 deficit.

Two Athens Academy free throws at 32.6 seconds and another at 22.0 gave them a 46-41 lead which was reduced to a final victory margin of 46-43 for the Lady Spartans by a long deuce by Spano with seven seconds left.

Leading scorers for the Lady Indians were Floyd with 13 points, Cornett and McClure with 10 each, and Spano with 6 while McClure led in assists with 3 and was followed by Byers and Cornett with 2 each. Leaders in rebounds were Floyd with 7, Byers with 6, Spano with 5, and McClure with 4.

Most Lady Indian followers viewing the game would likely agree with head coach Brian Hunnicutt's informing the team that he was just as proud of them and their determination and success in their loss as he would have been if victorious under the circumstances of three key players being either missing or playing in pain.

The Lady Spartans were led in scoring by 5'10" freshman Rose Bone with 16 points, junior Greer Moseley with 12, and senior Gabby Mastandria with 10.