

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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## Indians breeze past Rabun, edge Banks in Friday-night thriller

By Jerry Kendall  
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Jake McTaggart takes a 12-foot jumper in the paint during the win over Banks County on Friday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

The Region 8-A Towns County Indians varsity basketball team, ranked fourth in the state in the most recent Class A Public poll by the Atlanta Journal and Constitution (AJC), extended their record to 6-1 last week when they took two victories over Banks County and Rabun County from Region 8AA.

They squeezed past Banks County, the AJC's 10th ranked Class AA team by a 63-62 score at home on Friday and then traveled to Tiger on Saturday and took a decisive 79-56 victory over Rabun County.

The Indians had played just two games, at home against Region 8A foe Social Circle and at Class 7A Collins Hill, between December 4 and the January 8 matchup with Banks County due to Covid-19 issues at schools with whom other games were scheduled.

Although Rabun County had struggled to just a 2-11 record as they entered the game against the Indians they were on a bit of an upswing as they had won two of their last four games and three of their last four losses were by either three or four points to Class 3A, 5A, and 7A schools with the Class 3A opponent, Franklin County, having won seven of their last eight games through last week.

On the other hand, Banks County entered the game with an 11-5 record, compared to just 4-1 for the Indians due to Covid-19 postponements and cancellations. Two of the five Banks losses had been by one point, to Class 4A White County and Class 7A power Gainesville and another by four points to Class 6A Heritage of Conyers.

It is also of great significance that the Leopards got a 71-69 victory over Class 6A Buford, one of just two losses for the AJC's statewide tenth ranked team in that classification with the other loss being by a 74-66 score to Choctawhatchee of Fort Walton Beach, the second ranked Class 5A school in Florida.

**Indians 63, Banks County 62** – The Banks County game was highlighted by explosive scoring runs by both state ranked teams with each squad giving the appearance on one occasion to be seizing control of the game but the other returning the favor with explosive rallies of their own and the game ending in a one point Towns victory.

The first quarter turned out to be a small preview of things to come as the Indians used a 9-0 scoring run between the 4:31 and 2:58 marks in rallying past a 10-6 deficit for a 15-10 lead but requiring a trey by senior Kolby Moss as time expired for an 18-15 Indians lead after one quarter.

First quarter highlights for the Indians included an early pair of putback baskets and a later baseline jumper for six points by junior Jake McTaggart and ten points by Moss on two treys and two deuces with each of the treys giving the Indians their only leads of the quarter of 11-10 at the 4:02 mark and at the end.

The quarter ending trey by Moss turned out to be the start of a 14-0 run by the Indians highlighted by treys by junior Collin Crowder and Moss and a three point play off

a steal by senior Kabe Ellis for a 29-15 Towns lead at the 3:55 mark of the second quarter. A four point play on a trey and free throw when fouled on the shot by senior Colton Day almost matched an old fashioned three point play and a 29-20 score for a 33-20 Indians advantage at the 2:56 mark and the appearance of potential for a dominant Indians win.

But this just set the stage for a 12-0 quarter ending finish by the Leopards for just a 33-32 deficit at intermission and a brief flurry of Indian turnovers assisted the Leopards in scoring the first four points of the third quarter for an overall 16-0 run and a 36-33 lead at the 6:02 mark.

The Indians rebounded for a brief 9-5 scoring run of their own for a 42-41 lead on a trey by junior Aidan Berrong at the 5:03 mark with two free throws and a deuce by Moss for four points included in the run but the Leopards weren't through with their heroics. They included two treys in 14-2 quarter ending scoring run interrupted only by a Moss deuce over the final 3:08 of the quarter giving the appearance of taking control of the game with a 55-44 lead entering the fourth quarter.

This was not to be, however, as the Indians again came alive by opening the fourth quarter on a 12-1 scoring run and tied the score at 56-56. The rally was begun on a deuce and trey by Moss wrapped around deuces by Berrong and McTaggart at the 4:46 mark.

It was a real battle the rest of the way as Banks responded with a pair of deuces for a 60-56 lead at the 2:54 mark only to have Ellis and Moss rise to the occasion after that. Ellis sank his second trey of the quarter at 2:31 for just a 60-59 Banks lead and Ellis got the ball to Moss on an inbounds play at 55.4 seconds with Moss being hammered on the shot and calmly sinking two free throws for a 61-60 Indians lead.

It required just 12 seconds, however, for Banks to sink a field goal for a 62-61 advantage at 43 seconds with Moss coming up with another clutch play at 28 seconds when he sank a runner in the lane for a 63-62 Indians lead which would hold up for the victory but still with dramatics to come.

The Leopards missed a trey attempt after that with Moss claiming the defensive rebound and Banks, with just two team fouls having to foul

to get the Indians to a one and one free throw situation and a chance to get the ball back. They committed the required four fouls getting them to six for the quarter between the 9.4 and 4.2 seconds marks and sending the Indians to the foul line.

The Indians missed the one and one free throw attempt at the 4.2 seconds mark but the miss turned out to be a big break for the Indians as Crowder grabbed the rebound and the Indians were able to run out the final seconds instead of the Leopards having an opportunity to get off a shot for a tie or win if one or two free throws had been made by the Indians.

Moss led the scoring for the Indians with 28 points and was followed by McTaggart with 12, Ellis with 9, Berrong and Crowder with 5 each, and Day with 4. Leaders in assists were Berrong with 5 and Ellis with 4 while leaders in rebounds were McTaggart with 10, Crowder with 6, and Berrong and Moss with 5 each. Moss had a weekend to remember as related to shooting accuracy.

In the Banks and Rabun County games, he sank 14 of 21 two point attempts, 5 of 7 three point attempts, and 6 of 6 free throw attempts in totaling 49 points in the two games. Scoring leaders for the Leopards were seniors Garrett

Presley with 23 points and Pierce Martin with 14 and junior Bradley Lewis with 10.

**Indians 79, Rabun County 56** – It required just four minutes and 12 seconds of playing time for the Indians to spring out to an 11-0 lead at Rabun County at the 3:48 mark of the first quarter and with the exception of a 5-0 first quarter finish on a trey and deuce for just a 17-11 Indians lead, the Indians would coast to a decisive 79-56 victory.

A trey by Berrong at the 7:28 mark of the first quarter got the Indians a lead they would not relinquish with five Indians entering the scoring column in the quarter and leaders being Moss with six points

and Berrong with 5. A pair of deuces by j McTaggart got the Indians off and running in the second quarter with Moss contributing 11 points, Ellis six, and Berrong 5 as the Indians held a 45-26 lead at intermission on Ellis' second trey of the quarter.

McTaggart took the scoring lead with eight points in the third quarter and was followed by Ellis with four with the Indians leading 63-43 entering the fourth quarter.

Five different Indians had put points on the scoreboard in each of the first three quarters, with six entering the scoring column in the fourth, with leaders being junior Kyle Oakes with four points on a pair of deuces, and junior Collin Crowder contributing three on an old fashioned 3-point play, and Berrong adding three on a trey as the Indians finished off a 79-56 victory.

Scoring leaders for the Indians for the game were Moss with 21 points, Ellis and McTaggart with 14 each, Berrong with 10, senior Colton Day and Oakes with 6 each, and McClure with 5 while leaders in assists were Ellis with 5, Berrong and Oakes with 4 each, McTaggart with 3, and Moss with 2.

Leaders in rebounds were Ellis with 7, McTaggart and Moss with 6 each, and Berrong with 3 while leaders in steals were Ellis and Moss with 3 each and freshman Zane Floyd, McTaggart, and senior Luis Quijada with 2 each.

The Wildcats were led in scoring by junior Connor McKay with 14 points and senior Adriel Clark with 13.

## Lady Indians fall to state ranked Banks and Rabun

By Jerry Kendall  
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A very challenging season continued for the Class A Towns County Lady Indians varsity basketball team last week when they fell to defeat to the Banks County Lady Leopards at home on Friday and then to the Lady Wildcats at Rabun County on Saturday. Both Class AA teams are state ranked by the Atlanta Journal and Constitution (AJC) poll with Rabun County being the top ranked team in the state and Banks County in the tenth position.

The Lady Indians completed the week with a 1-5 record while Rabun County improved to 10-0 and Banks County to 11-7 with both of those teams facing quite prominent levels of competition. After the Lady Indians host Region 8A Public foe Lake Oconee Academy Charter School of Greensboro this Friday, four of their first eight opponents will have been AJC top ten ranked teams in the state.

Lake Oconee at this writing is ranked third in the AJC Class A Public poll with an 11-0 record and Tallulah Falls, a 48-44 winner over the Lady Indians in early December is ranked tenth with an 8-3 record in the Class A Private poll.

The extent of the challenge to this point for the Lady Indians is emphasized by the fact that they played just one game, at Athens Academy with the Spartans currently holding a 9-3 record, in thirty four days between December 4 and the Banks County game on January 8 with most of their opponents pretty much in midseason form and the Lady Indians in a catch up situation as related to the vital issue of game competition.

Further, there have been several instances of missed prac-



Coach Hunnicutt at Rabun County. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

tices by several Lady Indians due to Covid-19 quarantines and the Lady Indians were further limited in the Banks and Rabun games by productive sophomore Sarah Shook seeing limited action while completing recovery from a bout with strep throat.

**Banks County 58, Lady Indians 32** – The Lady Leopards of Banks County quickly lived up to their billing as they included a pair of treys in taking an 8-1 lead by the 5:32 mark of the first quarter and held a 16-7 advantage at quarter's end. A trey and free throw by senior Vanessa Floyd for four points and three free throws by senior Kennedy Henson accounted for all of the Lady Indian points in the quarter.

The second and third quarters saw similar results with a pair of treys by Henson for six points being the highlight of the second as Banks held a 34-15 lead at intermission. The Lady Indians outscored the Lady Panthers 7-4 on deuces by Floyd and senior Jayce Young and a trey by Henson for

a 38-22 deficit by the mid point of the third quarter but the Lady Leopards struck for the final ten points of the quarter for a 48-22 lead by quarter's end.

The two teams played to a 10-10 standoff in the fourth quarter with Lady Indian highlights being two deuces for four points by Floyd and a trey by sophomore Tabitha Barnes as the Lady Leopards closed out a 58-32 victory.

Scoring leaders for the Lady Indians were Henson with 13 points, Floyd with 12, and Barnes with 3 while leaders in assists were Floyd with 3 and Henson with 2. Leading in rebounds were Henson with 6 and senior Abby Mauldin with 3 while leaders in steals were Barnes, Floyd, and Henson with 2 each. Scoring leaders for the Lady Leopards were sophomore Kamryn Grier with 20 points, senior Jenna Reeves with 16, and freshman Addison Hoard with 11.

**Rabun County 44, Lady**

**Indians 23** – It was quite a defensive battle the first half at Rabun County with both teams displaying exceptional defensive prowess as the Lady Wildcats did take a 14-7 lead after one quarter but held just a 4-3 advantage in the second for just an 18-10 lead at intermission.

This was quite an accomplishment for the Lady Indians to perform such a defensive feat against the top ranked Class AA team in the state. Senior Vanessa Floyd provided nine of the ten first half Lady Indian points on two deuces, a trey, and two free throws.

A trey by senior Kennedy Henson at the 6:52 mark of the third quarter had the Lady Indians within 18-13 but the Lady Cats finished the quarter by including three treys in a 14-2 run interrupted only by a pair of free throws by Henson for a 32-15 lead entering the fourth quarter.

Henson continued her good last half work by sinking a second trey just 16 seconds into the fourth quarter and she added three for four free throw shooting for a six points quarter as Rabun closed out a 44-23 victory, with their point total significantly below their scoring average of nearly 59 points per game in their first nine games.

Floyd and Henson tied for the lead in scoring for the Lady Indians with 11 points each and they also tied for the lead in assists with 1 each. Leaders in rebounds were Henson with 5, Floyd with 4, and sophomore Tabitha Barnes and senior Abby Mauldin with 3 each while leaders in steals were Henson with 3 and Floyd and senior Jayce Young with 2 each.

Scoring leaders for the Lady Wildcats for the game were freshman Ellie Southards with 11 points and junior Gracie Deetz with 10.