

Towns County Sports

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Indians sweep past region foes Hebron Christian and Commerce

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The Towns County Indians varsity basketball teams continued a very noteworthy and memorable season last week when they traveled to face highly regarded Hebron Christian Academy in Dacula and came away with a rousing 77-58 victory on Tuesday and returned home on Friday where they escaped with a 64-61 victory when a late Commerce rally fell just short in the final seconds of the game.

By week's end, Hebron had rebounded to take a 55-53 victory at region foe Riverside Military Academy on Friday and finished the week with an overall 13-7 record, including 4-2 in the region while Commerce completed the week with and overall 11-10 record but just 1-5 in region play.

With two weeks remaining in regular season play, Providence Christian leads the region with a 5-1 record and Tallulah Falls is in second place with a 4-1 record and the only school in the region with five regular season games left, including hosting the Indians next Tuesday, January 28.

The Indians sport a 12-6 overall record, including 4-2 in region play which is good for a tie for third place with Athens Academy and Hebron Christian but with the Indians currently holding a tie breaker with these two teams by virtue of their road wins over the two teams.

Riverside Military holds sixth place in the standings with a 4-3 region record and is followed by Prince Avenue Christian School at 3-3, Lakeview Academy at 2-4, George Walton Academy at 2-5, Commerce at 1-5, and Athens Christian at 1-6.

With lots of important region games coming up during this week and next, scheduling for the Region 8A Tournament at Commerce will be done after regular season play is completed. The tournament will begin at Commerce on Monday, February 3.

On the Class A Public State Tournament front, the Indians have achieved a quite admirable standing through games of last week. For the eighth and final year, Power Points are used based on team records with difficulty of schedule factored in to determine who makes the tournament and seeding of the 24 teams making the tournament.

Through Monday, the Indians are in 10th place in the Power Points standings, just behind Manchester of Region 4A. Upon completion of the season, the top eight teams will receive a first round bye while teams nine through



The Towns County Indians held off a late rally from Commerce last Friday night, eventually surviving 64-61. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

16 will host teams in the 17 through 24 spots with the top eight teams then hosting the winners of the first round games in second round play.

Indians 77, Hebron Christian Academy 58 – The game between the Indians and Hebron Christian was quite a battle for almost two and a half quarters with 10 lead changes and three ties before the Indians seized control and dominated the game from the 4:52 mark of the third quarter until the final buzzer.

A driving left handed layup by sophomore Collin Crowder got the Indians a 2-0 lead less than a minute into the game but hot field goal and free throw shooting by the Lions would keep them ahead of the Indians for much of the first half and for a few moments in the third quarter.

They sank two treys for a 6-2 lead at the 6:11 mark of the first quarter before a brief scoring spurt by the Indians on two free throws by junior Kolby Moss, an old fashioned three point play by junior Aidan Berrong, and a deuce by sophomore Kyle Oakes got the Indians a 9-6 lead at the 4:39 mark of the first quarter.

That lead would last for just ten seconds, however, as the Lions tied the score on their third trey and ended a 13-3 run with their fourth and fifth treys of the quarter for what turned out to be their biggest lead of the game of 19-12 at the 2:03 mark. But it would then be the Indians' turn for a scoring run.

A deuce and free throw by Oakes and a trey by Crowder beginning at the

1:49 mark of the first quarter got the Indians within 19-18 at quarter's end and a pair of free throws by Moss just 17 seconds into the second quarter completed an 8-0 Indians run for a 20-19 Towns lead. Berrong followed a three point play by the Lions for a 22-20 lead with a deuce for a 22-22 tie and Moss matched a Hebron deuce at 6:06 for a 24-24 standoff.

Another three point play and two free throws had the Lions ahead 29-24 at the 3:39 mark but the Indians struck for a 9-3 run on a trey by Berrong, a drive for two points by Moss, a defensive rebound and coast to coast run by Crowder for a deuce, and two free throws by Moss for a 33-32 Indians lead at 1:24.

Two free throws by the Lions at 1:15 got them ahead 34-33 but junior Colton Day took a defensive rebound coast to coast for a 35-34 Indians lead and Berrong picked up a loose ball and took it coast to coast for a 37-34 Towns lead at intermission.

The Lions followed an Indians free throw with a deuce and trey for a 39-38 advantage at 5:27 of the third quarter for what would be their last lead of the game as a deuce by Moss at 4:52 got the Indians on an explosive 39-19 finish in just under 13 minutes of playing time.

Moss and Berrong contributed nine and seven points respectively in the third quarter and in the fourth Berrong added ten and Crowder and Moss six each for the Indians as they closed out the 77-58 victory.

Scoring leaders for the game for the Indians were Berrong with 27 points, Moss with 25, Crowder with 13, and Oakes with 10 while leaders in assists were Oakes with 6, Moss with 4, and Berrong, Crowder, and Day with 2 each. Crowder and Berrong led in rebounds with 7 each and were followed by Moss with 6, Day with 5, and Oakes with 4 while Berrong and Moss led in steals with 2 each. Eight players entered the scoring column for the Lions with junior Sam Hutto leading with 27 points.

Indians 64, Commerce 61 – There have been numerous references to dominating scoring runs by and against the Lady Indians and Indians during this season and prior TCHS seasons as well with this phenomenon certainly being present in this game.

The Indians gave the appearance of taking complete control of the game with Commerce when they built leads of 28-12 and 30-14 by the 3:12 mark of the second quarter.

Seven Indians put points on the scoreboard in the early game heroics with leaders being junior Aidan Berrong with ten points and sophomores Kyle Oakes with eight and Collin Crowder scoring the final four points during the run. The Indians held a 14-8 lead after one quarter on the way to the aforementioned 30-14 advantage.

As often seems to be the case, however, it can be difficult to maintain the momentum when a game gives the appearance of being an easy win and perhaps that

was a factor in the Indians' shooting suddenly going stone cold for a lengthy period after that while the Tigers overcame cold shooting of their own with hot shooting.

The Tigers finished the second quarter on a modest 5-1 run for a 31-19 deficit and they included a trey and an old fashioned three point play in a 14-2 start to the third quarter interrupted only by a deuce by junior Kolby Moss for a 33-33 standoff at the 4:48 mark.

Berrong claimed a defensive rebound, took the ball coast to coast, and sank two resulting free throws for a 35-33 Towns lead at 4:10 and Moss followed a Tiger trey by repeating the Berrong task of claiming a defensive rebound, taking the ball coast to coast, and completing an old fashioned three points play for a 38-36 Towns lead they would not relinquish but have threatened until the final seconds of the game.

The play by Moss would be the start of a 12-2 Indians run the remainder of the quarter highlighted by two treys by Berrong and a drive to the basket for a deuce by junior Colton Day as time expired with the Indians holding a 47-38 lead entering the fourth quarter.

Two free throws each by Moss and Day, two deuces by Berrong, and a field goal by Moss by the 4:53 mark of the fourth quarter had the Indians leading 57-45 but a Tiger trey at 4:36 triggered a 9-0 run for just a 57-54 Towns lead at 3:12. Moss wrapped a deuce and a three point play around a Commerce deuce

for a 62-56 Towns lead at the 1:10 mark.

Your reporter usually hesitates to report disputable judgement calls by officials due to this being such a challenging job and different angles viewed by the officials than from the stands but two such events occurred in the final minute of play with the Tigers taking full advantage in reducing the Towns lead. A Tiger clearly "crow hopped" for a walking violation not seen by the officials while nearly falling out of bounds prior to a deuce at the forty three seconds mark.

And then an Indian turnover was followed by a call giving the Tigers possession on an out of bounds event with the Tiger involved showing clear surprise and laughing when he realized his team retained possession prior to a trey at the half minute mark. Such breaks are all part of the game but potentially devastating for the Indians in this case in such a close battle.

These two baskets got the Tigers within 62-61 and when the Indians missed two free throws at 21.3 seconds, the Tigers got the ball back and got off two field goal attempts for the lead in the final five seconds.

The shots missed the mark with Moss claiming a rebound after the second and sinking two free throws at seven tenths of a second, giving him a total of 11 points in the decisive fourth quarter, to set the final score at 64-61 as the Indians survived the last ditch effort by the Tigers.

The Indians clearly "dodged a bullet" in holding on for this win but perhaps they were due a break when looking back at an off target trey attempt by region leader Providence Christian which caromed off the backboard and into the basket for a 61-58 win over the Indians as time expired just two weeks prior.

Seven Indians entered the scoring column in the game with leaders being Berrong with 24 points, Moss with 18, Oakes with 8, Day with 6, and Crowder with 4 while assists leaders were Moss with 8, Crowder with 4, Oakes with 3, and Berrong and Day with 2 each.

Leaders in rebounds were Day with 9, Moss with 8, Berrong and Crowder with 5 each, and Oakes with 3. Crowder led in steals with 3 and blocked a shot while Berrong and Oakes contributed 2 steals each. It is most noteworthy that Crowder was battling sickness but giving all the energy he could muster in such an important game for his team.

Scoring leaders for the Tigers were 6'4" junior Ian McConnell with 21 points, freshman Cayden Lord with 12, and junior Creed Dunbar with 11.

Class A Public Boys Power Ratings

As of Monday, Jan. 20

Rank	School	Region	Record	Ranking
1	Treutlen	3-A	20-0	14.15
2	Wilcox County	2-A	17-0	13.06
3	Terrell County	1-A	15-0	11.67
4	Wilkinson County	7-A	13-7	11.66
5	Calhoun County	1-A	15-2	10.68
6	Hancock Central	7-A	16-3	10.40
7	Dooly County	4-A	15-4	9.97
8	Lincoln County	7-A	11-5	9.84
9	Manchester	4-A	12-4	9.64
10	Towns County	8-A	12-6	9.58
11	Drew Charter School	5-A	12-7	9.51
12	Lanier County	2-A	16-3	9.40
13	Macon County	4-A	11-6	9.26
14	Warren County	7-A	12-1	9.18
15	Turner County	2-A	15-4	9.11
16	Taylor County	4-A	11-7	8.65
17	Schley County	4-A	10-5	8.63
18	Mitchell County	1-A	11-4	8.59
19	Clinch County	2-A	9-7	8.54
20	Georgia Military College	7-A	11-4	7.86
21	Wheeler County	3-A	14-6	7.61
22	Marion County	4-A	9-4	7.47
23	Irwin County	2-A	10-9	7.43
24	Pelham	1-A	9-6	7.40
25	Bowdon	6-A	12-8	7.30
26	Charlton County	2-A	9-11	7.26
27	Randolph-Clay	1-A	11-6	7.12
28	Mt. Zion, Carroll	6-A	8-9	7.11
29	Claxton	3-A	9-8	6.90
30	Miller County	1-A	10-7	6.79



The Indians' starting lineup is introduced prior to Tuesday's region contest at Hebron Christian Academy. Photo/Lowell Nicholson