

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Indians sending four wrestlers to sectionals for chance at state

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Four Towns County Indian wrestlers advanced from area competition last weekend in Commerce, earning spots to compete in this weekend's sectionals tournament at Holy Innocents' Episcopal School in Atlanta.

Sophomore Blaine Rogers came in Second Place for his weight class, seniors Nick Shook and Kendall Barnard came in third for their weight classes, and junior Kaine Hoffman took fourth place in his class.

The Top Four placers in each weight class qualified to wrestle at sectionals, and Wes Calhoun, who placed fifth in his class, will serve as an alternate for the competition.

Regardless of placement, all Indian grapplers wrestled their best, and represented Towns County well in Commerce.

"It went as well as we had hoped, and better than we had thought it would turn out," said Indians Wrestling Head Coach Jeff Stowers. "Our goal was to get three out, and we ended up getting four and an alternate."

Due to last year's region realignments, Towns faced some new competition this year that had previously been in the AA classification, which presented fresh challenges for the Indians to



Towns County's Blaine Rogers (second from left) finished second in the 145-pound weight division.

overcome. "We put on a show, and we wrestled about as good as we could, got as many people down there as I think we should have gotten," said Coach Stowers. "We had a couple young kids at some lightweight weight classes that in other years probably would have qualified, but

this year there were just some really good kids that got left at home."

To move forward from sectionals, the four Indian competitors will need to place in the Top Four there, too. Sectionals is really considered the first round of the state tournament, so by the

time four wrestlers make it from each of the sectionals, the state tournament will be ready to commence with its eight-man elite bracket.

Looking to sectionals, the coach said his Indians

are mainly working on fine tuning this week, but that there's always room for improvement.

"We've got a few things that we've got to work on," said Coach Stowers. "And

we've got to do some scouting. Once we find out who we're wrestling, we'll do a little bit of scouting and try to figure out who we're going to wrestle, and find out some information about them and see if we can pinpoint some things that we can do to them.

"But really, wrestling's about making sure you're prepared mentally and physically, so most of this week is just going to be working on what our kids do, and letting them try to perfect the kind of things they work on, and make sure everybody stays in shape and stays healthy."

BMT Hike

Hike: BMT Section 14 - TN 68 to Unicoi Gap via Buck Bald. 5.6 miles; moderate to strenuous. The first 45 min. is uphill, but your effort will be rewarded with lots of good views, history, and culture. Lunch will be at the Buck Bald picnic area, where you'll have a 360 degree view of the surrounding mountains. Unicoi Gap is near the TN/NC state line and is a site on the historic Unicoi Turnpike National Historic Trail. Shuttle is involved; the Coker Creek Visitors Center is on the shuttle route. Register with hike leaders Clare and Ed Sullivan at clare7982@gmail.com.

Home Stretch... continued from 2B

that the Indians travel to Oconee County to face the Prince Avenue Christian School Wolverines.

Actually, Prince Avenue Baptist Church and the accompanying school were located for a number of years in downtown Athens not far from the bustling business district but the church purchased land some twelve miles away in Oconee County near Bogart several years ago and built a very impressive complex for the church and school while retaining the Prince Avenue name.

With this in mind, the Indians traveled to Oconee County last Saturday to take on the Wolverines in a Region 8A contest.

The Wolverines entered the game with an overall 14-9 record, including 7-5 in the region and right behind the Indians who had a 7-4 region record entering the game.

The game appeared in the early minutes to be a mismatch as the Indians struck for a 12-0 lead by the 4:10 mark of the first quarter with the early scoring run highlighted by a three point play and a trey by Will De Vries and two deuces by Major Moss.

The Wolverines would give a preview of their persistence the remainder of the game, however, by including a trey in each of a 7-0 run prior to and a 5-0 run following a 6-0 run by the Indians as they got within 12-7 and then closed from an 18-7 deficit to 18-12 by the end of the first quarter.

De Vries contributed eight points and Moss six in first quarter action for the Indians.

The first five minutes of the second quarter saw the Indians score two points on five occasions but with the Wolver-

ines responding with a field goal each time and gaining two points in the process as two of their baskets were treys for a 26-22 Towns lead at exactly the three minute mark.

The Indians would finish the quarter on a 7-2 run, however, for a 33-24 lead at halftime. Zach Davenport with six points and De Vries with five would lead the Indians in scoring for that quarter.

The third quarter would see the Indians take a 40-28 lead by the 4:21 mark only to see the Wolverines strike for three treys between the 3:31 and 1:58 marks for just a 40-37 Indian lead but the Indians would use a field goal by Davenport and De Vries' second of the quarter for a 44-37 lead entering the fourth quarter.

The Wolverines edged to within 46-41 by the 6:10 mark of the fourth quarter but the Indians used six straight points by Davenport and De Vries included a three point play among five points in a 12-2 run which gave them a 58-43 lead at 2:06 which became a 64-49 victory.

The Indians, who have missed some opportunities at the foul line in prior games, used eight for ten free throw shooting to great advantage in the fourth quarter in taking the victory.

While speaking of free throws, the Indians for the week as a team provided overall outstanding accuracy in sinking 20 of 29 attempts at Commerce, 8 of 15 against Athens Christian, and 12 of 16 at Prince Avenue. Individually, Davenport sank 15 of 19 attempts and De Vries 14 of 18 for the week.

De Vries led the scoring

parade for the Indians with 22 points against Prince Avenue and was followed by Davenport and Moss with 14 each, Logan Cowart with 8, Will Travis with 4, and Evan Berrong with 2 while Moss led in assists with 7 and was followed by Davenport with 4 and Cowart with 2.

For the second time in the three games last week, Moss corralled 15 rebounds and was followed by Cowart, Davenport, De Vries, and Travis with 6 each, Berrong with 2, and junior Cole Ledford and senior Colton Shook with 1 each.

Cowart suffered a blow to the mouth that his registered nurse mom expected to require stitches following the game but he returned to the game at the 3:34 mark of the second quarter after the injury was sustained with just 2.6 seconds left in the first quarter in providing solid contributions to the victory, including scoring a field goal in each quarter. The Wolverines were led in scoring for the game by senior Sam Todd with 10 points and junior Dalton Meeler with 11.

Team statistics proved to be interesting with the Indians holding a twenty five to sixteen advantage in field goals but with half of the Wolverines' baskets from three point range enabling them to keep the game competitive until the final minutes.

The Indians also led in free throws in sinking the previously mentioned twelve for sixteen attempts compared to nine for fourteen for the Wolverines and the Indians held a whopping forty five to twenty rebounding advantage.

Lady Indians... continued from 2B

Indian turnover at 1:04 and it would hold up for the victory when the Lady Indians couldn't take advantage of two missed free throws by the Lady Eagles during the last half minute of play. This report would not be complete without giving credit to Ledford for taking three late charges in helping to keep the Lady Indians in position for a possible victory.

When the game was complete, it was interesting to note that there had been ten ties and eight lead changes in perhaps the most competitive and interesting game of the season for the Lady Indians.

Henson led the Lady Indians in scoring for the game with 17 points and was followed by Cornett and McClure with 6 points each, Ledford and Shook with 4 each, and Denton and Spano with 2 each while McClure and Shook led with 2 assists each and were followed by Cornett and Henson with 1 each. The Lady Eagles were led in scoring by junior Sydney Bridges with 16 points and sophomore Miranda Powell with 14. Statistically, the two teams were well matched much like in the Commerce game with both teams sinking four treys, the

Lady Eagles leading in deuces 13-12, and each team sinking five free throws although it required twelve attempts for the Lady Eagles compared to just eight for the Lady Indians.

Prince Avenue Christian 65, Lady Indians 28 - A noticeable size advantage and excellent shooting displayed by their opponent turned out to be an early deciding factor in the Lady Indians' game at Prince Avenue near Athens on Saturday night. The Lady Wolverines had their way from beginning to end in taking the 65-28 victory in improving their overall record to 16-6 and their region record to 9-3, good for second place overall behind undefeated Lakeview Academy and leading in Sub-Region 8A South although with the same number of losses as George Walton Academy with a 7-3 record.

Prince Avenue can clinch the first place seed from the south if victorious in their only game of the week at Tallulah Falls on Friday night of this week as they hold the tie breaker with two wins over George Walton and three wins by George Walton would only give them a tie for first place with Prince.

vaulted out to 10-1 and 16-3 leads by the three minutes mark of the first quarter with the Lady Indians finishing the quarter with a long deuce by Sophia Shook and a trey by Taylor Cornett for a 16-8 Lady Indians deficit at quarter's end. The Lady Wolverines would include three treys as they increased their lead to 33-13 by halftime and they would lead 48-22 after three quarters on the way to the 65-28 margin of victory.

Madison McClure would include six for six free throw shooting in the third quarter and Kirsten Ledford a field goal and two free throws in the fourth for four points production as the top quarterly points contributions for the Lady Indians.

McClure took the lead in scoring for the game with 11 points and was followed by Ledford with 8, Cornett with 5, and Kenzlee Denton and Shook with 2 each while Ledford and McClure led in assists with 1 each. The Lady Indians continued the strong free throw shooting mentioned in the Commerce and Athens Christian coverage in the Prince Avenue game as they sank 15 of 21 attempts.

Tony Stewart will retain his role as car owner in NASCAR, but will not participate as a NASCAR driver. That doesn't mean he has hung up his driving helmet. No, just the opposite. He plans to run at least 71 races in open wheel and sprint cars in 2017, and many of them will be against his own teammate, Donny Schatz, driver of the No. 15 TSR-Curb Agajanian in the World of Outlaw Series.

Schatz, a 39-year-old Fargo, North Dakota native has created his own dynasty in the World of Outlaw Series by winning eight series titles. When he took the checkered flag at the end of the 2016 season, he had compiled 229 WoO "A-Feature" wins.

"I appreciate everyone's kind words," Schatz said. "It's very overwhelming. Twenty times I've stood on this stage as a World of Outlaw. I would never have guessed that would be the case back in 1997 when I came out here. Back then, I don't know what I was thinking, but somehow I won the rookie of the year and to this day it's still my most prized possession. Here we are 20 years later and it still hasn't all quite sunk in. What has sunk in is the importance of the people you are surrounded by. I am standing here as an eight-time champion because of the organization Tony Stewart has built and continues to refine. It is nothing short of incredible. It's a huge honor for me to be a small part of this team's success."

Donny's dad also drove sprint cars, but in 1977, he went into the truck stop business, and that pretty much put an end to his driving. Donny was bitten by the racing bug and by the age of ten was behind the wheel of a go-kart.

"You look back on that now and you remember how excited you used to be when the vehicle left the house and you had everything loaded and how nervous you got when you pulled into the track," said Schatz. "Everything you did was an absolute blast. Some days you wish this level of racing (World of Outlaw Series) was a little bit more like that. But it's a little different when you get money involved."

"You have to love racing in order to survive. I think from the first time I sat in a seat I was drawn to racing. Sitting in a sprint car made chills go up and down my spine. The biggest problem I had in wanting to drive a sprint was my age. None of the tracks would allow a fourteen-year-old to race."

Occasionally he was able to get out on the track during a hot-lap session. In 1993, while still in high school, he was allowed to make his first start in a sprint car race at Missouri State Fairgrounds in Sedalia, Missouri.

In January 1997, Schatz joined the World of Outlaws and won Rookie of the Year in his first season, but his first WoO victory didn't come until 1998. He won many big races during the next eight racing seasons, but it wasn't until 2006 that he claimed his first WoO title. He won the title a second time in 2007, and teamed up with Tony Stewart Racing in 2008.

"The reason I started driving for Tony isn't because we didn't have good equipment," said Schatz. "We had the best.

NASCAR 2017

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Stewart And Schatz; Two Hard Racers



Donny Schatz in 2016. Winner of eight World of Outlaw championships.

But the entire racing team and operation was a family affair. All my family had obligations outside racing. They had over three hundred employees, and a couple of businesses that had to be taken care of. Everyone wanted to go racing, but it reached a point where they couldn't.

"When Tony called, it offered everyone an out: My parents could take care of the business and still get away to go racing. The family no longer needed to worry about what the race team's needs were. I said O.K. to Tony in order to free my family and myself from many of the every day details encountered by the race team.

"I went from a family owned operation, to driving for someone else. It was Tony's team. He had the equipment, and he hired me to drive. He hired the crew chief and other employees. He also had sponsors in place. My role became that of a driver, not someone who wears fifty different hats.

"For me it was the best of both worlds.

"Now, some people think our team operates with a lot of engineers and the latest technical machinery, but that's not true. I guess in his NASCAR operation Tony utilizes them, but we still have to figure things out for ourselves.

"He lets us do the job. He doesn't step on our toes, but we all know that we have to perform on the race track. He takes care of the people, but at the end of the day, we all know it's a business."

Since 1999, Schatz has spent time during the winter months, racing sprint cars in Australia. His success "Down Under" has been remarkable, as he's won a number of major events both in the World Series Sprint car tour and major events at Sydney Speedway. As a result, he's created quite a following.

"Believe me, racing is a lot of fun, but it's not for everyone," continued Schatz. "It's something that takes its toll on you. If you are going to beat up and down the road like I have my whole life, you miss out on a lot of things.

"I've got a daughter that just turned eighteen. When you focus on trying to be good at racing and you're traveling, you can't call in sick. If you miss a race, you miss a chance of winning a World of Outlaws championship."

During the past four seasons, Schatz has expanded his racing to include Dirt Late Model

competition. He earned victories in North Dakota in each of the last three seasons. He also made his World of Outlaws Late Model Series debut in July 2014 and competed in both the Knoxville Late Model Nationals Bad Boy Buggies World Finals in each of the last two seasons.

He and his wife, Erica, live in Fargo, N.D., with their daughter, Savanna. Schatz is a licensed pilot and spends a great deal of time working with his parents in their family truck stop businesses in Fargo and Minot. He is also enjoys hunting and snowmobiling.

NASCAR CONTINUES TO MAKE CHANGES

NASCAR announced last week that it is revamping how it will award points during races.

Under the new system, races will be divided into three segments, with drivers earning points on how they finish in each segment. The goal is to make the racing and competition more meaningful throughout the entire race, rather than just the final laps.

Races will now consist of three stages, with the top-10 finishers in each of the first two stages awarded bonus points. At the end of each stage, there will be a caution period in order to allow added television commercials. The final segment will conclude the race as usual, with the winner receiving 40 points, down to the 40th-place finisher, who earns one.

What else is in the works? Last week, Lee Spencer NASCAR.com senior writer reported that NASCAR was considering shortening the race weekend for teams.

They are looking at one-day shows for all three of the top touring series, including the newly named Monster Energy Cup Series. When Brad Keselowski was asked whether the driver's council is behind the decision, he replied, "I think the whole sport is. We're trying to be smart with our time, especially with late starts. Because you don't get home to see your family until two, three in the morning if you're on a race team, so you lose part of Monday, too. You have to find a way to get that day back and tie it all together. If you move qualifying closer to the race, you get that day back which is so important to everyone's quality of life in this sport."

The Associated Press reported that Carl Edwards is considering making a run for a seat in the U. S. Senate in 2018.

In an e-mail, Edwards said, "I believe firmly in the principles that the U.S. was founded upon. If I could help, I definitely would consider it." He went on to quote Gen. Douglas MacArthur: "No man is entitled to the blessings of freedom unless he be vigilant in its preservation."

On a different note, the average ticket price for a Cup race at an International Speedway Corporation track was \$90.12, an increase of 5.4 percent.

Racing Trivia Question: How many points races are in the 2017 Cup Series schedule?

Last Week's Question: Who was the winner of the 1959 Daytona 500? Answer: Lee Petty.

You may contact the Racing Reporter by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com. NTFBI2201CA