

Towns County Sports

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Cowart returns; Indians win at Commerce after close losses to Hebron, Athens Christian

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Life on the road for the Towns County Indians varsity basketball team proved to be very difficult on Tuesday and Friday of last week as they lost agonizingly close games at Hebron Christian Academy in Dacula on Tuesday and to Athens Christian School on Friday with this game played at Prince Avenue Christian School on Friday due to renovations being made to the Athens Christian gym.

Life on the road looked much brighter for the Indians on Saturday, however, as they traveled to Commerce for a play in game between the Indians as the fifth place team and Commerce as the sixth place squad in the north sub region of Region 8A. Perhaps the return of the Indians' 6'4" senior power player Logan Cowart was a factor as the Indians overcame a stunning 19-2 start by the home standing Tigers by outscoring them 67-30 the rest of the way for a 69-49 victory after facing stiff competition from the Tigers in two regular season games.

Hebron Christian Academy 80, Indians 79 – As in Hiawassee when the Hebron Lions sprang out to a 24-12 first quarter lead on January 12, they built a very similar 26-13 advantage after one quarter against the Indians in Dacula last Tuesday. After steadily falling further behind in the earlier game by a bulging 35-18 score by the 3:34 mark of the second quarter, the Indians used a lengthy 48-30 run in taking a 67-66 lead in the closing seconds before falling by a 68-67 score in that game.

Although the Indians would strike for an 8-2 run at the start of the second quarter for just a 29-21 deficit at the 4:44 mark, the Lions would use a 9-0 run between the 4:12 and 5:00 marks for a 38-21 lead and the same seventeen points Indians deficit as at 3:34 in the second quarter in Hiawassee. The remainder of last week's game would bring about strikingly similar results with the Indians rising up and, although not taking a lead as in Hiawassee, finishing the game on a 58-42 run but falling again by a single point, this time by an 80-79 score.

The Lions built their 26-13 first quarter lead despite six points each by senior Zach Davenport and freshman Kolby Moss and they would withstand six points by senior Evan Berrong and four by Davenport in the second quarter in maintaining their thirteen points lead at intermission but with two distinct Towns scoring runs included in the quarter.

The Indians opened the quarter with a 6-0 run for just a 26-19 deficit but were required to use an 8-0 run late in the quarter in response to a 12-2 Hebron run and the aforementioned 38-21 deficit for a 38-29 Hebron lead which became 42-29 at intermission when the Lions finished the quarter with a trey and free throw.

The Indians would then reduce the Lions lead by five points in the third quarter to 62-54 as six different Indians put points on the scoreboard with leaders being Berrong with three deuces and junior Brent Bradshaw with two treys for six points each, Davenport with five points on two deuces and a free throw, and junior Will



Towns County senior Logan Cowart at the free throw line during his return to action last week. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Travis with four points on a pair of deuces.

The two teams would pretty much swap points through the 2:26 mark of the fourth quarter with the Lions leading by a 73-64 score before a three points play, a deuce, and two free throws by Davenport had the Indians within 75-71 with 1:23 on the clock. And junior Trent Bradshaw followed two free throws by the Lions with a trey at forty three seconds for just a 77-74 Hebron lead.

The Lions sank a free throw at 40.7 seconds for a 78-74 lead but a free throw by Moss at 35.2 seconds and two by Davenport at 20.7 had the Indians within 78-77. The Indians got off a field goal attempt following a steal at fifteen seconds for a potential 79-78 lead and a trey at two seconds that would have given them an 80-80 tie but the shots wouldn't fall and a putback basket by junior Brett Denton at the buzzer set the final score at 80-79 as the Lions escaped with their second one point victory of the season over the Indians.

During the course of the game, it often appeared to Towns County folks that light touch contact was more likely to result in a foul call when done by the Indians than by the Lions and with heavy contact by the Lions sometimes going uncalled with this view seemingly confirmed by free throw shooting totals at game's end. The Lions wound up sinking a whopping 32 of 43 free throw attempts compared to just 14 for 20 by the Indians. Of course, it's not unusual for a very quick or very tall team, as examples, to receive more trips to the foul line but it is interesting to look back at the earlier game between the two teams in a one point victory by the Lions in Hiawassee when the Indians went 15 for 21 at the line as compared to less accurate success of 11 for 21 for the Lions.

The Indians were led in scoring by Davenport with 30 points, including fifteen in the fourth quarter, Berrong and Bradshaw with 12 each, Moss with 9, Travis with 8, including four in the fourth quarter, and Denton with 6 while Bradshaw led in assists with 6 and was followed by Davenport with 3. Leading in rebounds were Bradshaw with 8 and Moss and Travis with 7 each. The Lions were led in scoring by junior Alex Calvert with 20 points, senior Troy Allen with 18, and junior Will Warbington with 16.

Athens Christian School 54, Indians 51 – The Indians got a 2-0 lead just sixteen seconds into the game against Athens Christian on a field goal by junior Trent Bradshaw and followed a deuce by the Eagles with a tip in by senior Cole Ledford at 5:06 for a 4-2 lead they would hold by mostly slender margins until the Eagles forced a tie at the 2:28 mark of the fourth quarter.

The Indians would respond to the tie with a field goal by senior Zach Davenport at 2:11 for a 51-49 lead before being stung by the second of two disputable and crucial offensive foul calls on Davenport at 1:32 with the Indians failing to score again and a trey by the Eagles at thirteen seconds providing the difference in a 54-51 Athens victory with details described in the following paragraphs.

The Indians used four for four free throw shooting by Davenport and a field goal by freshman Kolby Moss between the 2:04 and 1:27 marks of the first quarter to extend a 7-6 lead to 13-6 which became 13-8 when the Eagles sank a field goal as the first quarter buzzer sounded.

The Indians would lead by such scores as 18-9, 22-14, and 26-18 in second quarter action by the 1:14 mark and after a deuce and a trey by Athens got the Eagles within 26-23 with 22 seconds on the clock, senior Bradley Benson nailed a trey at eight seconds for a 29-23 Indians lead at intermission. Benson provided five points and Davenport four for the Indians in the second quarter.

It seemed that every time the Indians would appear to be taking a bit of control of the game, the Eagles would come up with a big play or two in reducing Indian leads with this never more prevalent than in the third quarter. An early third quarter basket by Davenport for a 31-23 lead was more than matched by a deuce and trey by the Lions for 31-28 score.

And a 7-0 run on a deuce by junior Will Travis and a deuce and trey by Davenport for the Indians' biggest lead of 38-28 at 4:07 were matched by the Eagles who used a three points play in a 7-0 run of their own for a 38-35 Towns lead at 2:34. And finally as related to the third quarter, deuces by Davenport and Travis for a 42-35 Indians lead were nearly matched by an Eagles trey at the buzzer for a 42-38 Towns lead entering the fourth quarter.

The first of the two aforementioned disputable foul calls on Davenport came just seventeen seconds into the fourth quarter when a field goal on a drive to the basket was negated by a rare charging call on a play of this type by the Indians senior, leaving the score at 42-38 but of much greater significance being Davenport, who had reached two monumental scoring milestones earlier in the game addressed in a separate article, going to the bench with four fouls from that point of 7:43 until the 3:30 mark.

The Indians nevertheless extended their lead to 46-39 by the 5:21 mark on field goals by Moss and Travis but the Eagles sank a trey and a deuce both before and after a trey by junior Trent Bradshaw for a 10-3 run and a 49-49 standoff with 2:28 remaining in the game. A deuce by Davenport on an inbound play at 2:11 got the Indians back in front 51-49 but Davenport was charged with his fifth foul for the first time this season in his twenty fourth game at the 1:38 mark.

After claiming a rebound, Davenport was surrounded aggressively by Eagles players and instead of one of them being charged with what Indians fans would consider a "hanging on" foul, Davenport was charged with the offensive foul sending him to the bench for the remainder of the game.

The Indians had a chance to extend their lead at 22.9 seconds but missed a one and one free throw attempt and a trey by the Eagles at thirteen seconds gave them a 52-51 lead which would hold up for the victory when the Indians again missed a one and one free throw attempt at 6.5 seconds. The Eagles sank two free throws at 4.2 seconds for a final score of 54-51 as the Indians couldn't get off a trey attempt for a tie in the remaining time.

As for displeasure with the two foul calls on Davenport, your reporter viewed the officials as being quite competent during the course of the Lady Indians and Indians games and there is, of course, no doubt that the Lady Indians and Indians through the years have benefited on probably many occasions by similar judgment calls seen as disputable by the other team but not as noticeable to the Lady Indians and Indians and their followers. Such calls are a part of the game and life goes on but it was perhaps more difficult to accept when

considering the one sided free throw opportunities provided as addressed in the Indians' most recent prior game.

Davenport took the scoring lead for the Indians with 21 points and was followed by Travis with 9 points, Bradshaw with 8, Moss with 6, and Benson with 5 while Bradshaw led in assists with 5 and was followed by Davenport with 4 and junior Brett Denton and Moss with 2 each. Leaders in rebounds were Travis with 9, senior Cole Ledford with 5, and the quartet of Bradshaw, Davenport, Denton, and Moss with 4 each. The Eagles were led in scoring by seniors Kohn Phillips with 30 points and Cameron Hardesty with 10.

Indians 69, Commerce 49 – With the Indians finishing fifth in the north division of Region 8A and Commerce sixth, a play in game was necessitated between the two teams last Saturday to determine which team would face the fourth seed from the south sub region of the region. The "boys only" Riverside Military Academy's presence in the region leaves an unbalanced number of teams in the two sub regions in the boys division with the game between the Indians and Tigers the only such game required last Saturday.

It's always considered a tough assignment for a team to defeat an opponent three times in a season with the Indians' victories by seven points at Commerce and by fifteen in Hiawassee placing the Indians in this situation. And the fact that Commerce is the host team for this year's region tournament added a home court advantage for the Tigers.

The potential anxiety about facing the Tigers for the third time and on their home court was quickly presented as reality by the Tigers who sank three treys for a 9-0 lead less than two minutes into the game and they weren't finished with their opening statement. They followed a deuce by junior Will Travis with two more treys, two free throws, and a deuce for a 19-2 run in just four minutes and two seconds by the 3:58 mark of the first quarter.

But just as the Tigers couldn't seem to miss and Indian shots steadfastly refused to go in the basket in the opening minutes, the roles changed with the Indians charging out to a 15-2 run the remainder of the quarter. The Indians' scoring run was highlighted by

two field goals each by junior Trent Bradshaw and freshman Kolby Moss, a three points play by senior Evan Berrong, and Travis' second field goal of the quarter as the Indians edged to within 21-17 by quarter's end with the right handed Moss putting an exclamation point on the rally with an acrobatic left handed putback basket at the buzzer.

But the sudden scoring heroics by the Indians the final 3:42 of the quarter did not represent the main attraction of the quarter for the Indians. Instead, it was the welcomed appearance at the 4:32 mark when the Indians' 6'4" senior inside power player Logan Cowart returned to action for the first time since suffering a stress fracture to his foot in an all star football game on December 16 at Fannin County High School in Blue Ridge.

This was Cowart's first appearance in a basketball game in a period of seven weeks and one day since December 15 when the Indians faced Riverside Military Academy. And it was quickly clear to those in attendance during pretty brief but very effective appearances throughout the game as to how much the Indians missed his presence on the court, no doubt bringing thoughts to many as to the impact his presence could have had on his team if available for the seventeen games he missed due to the misfortune of his injury.

The Indians onslaught would continue in the second quarter following an early Eagles deuce as a trey by senior Zach Davenport triggered a 17-5 Towns run between the 7:17 and forty eight seconds marks for a 34-26 Towns lead which became 34-28 at intermission. Moss included a trey among seven points during the run with Davenport adding a deuce to his trey for five points and Berrong contributing two deuces for four points. Davenport's deuce at 5:36 got the Indians a 24-24 tie, a deuce by Moss gave them a 26-24 advantage at 5:07, and a free throw by Cowart at 4:01 got them a 27-26 lead they would not relinquish.

A trey and two free throws for five points by Bradshaw and a deuce and free throw for three points by Cowart highlighted third quarter action for the Indians when they slightly extended their lead to 45-36. Eight different Indians then put points on the score board in the fourth quarter as they completed a 69-49 victory with scoring highlights including six points by Davenport, four each by Bradshaw and Moss, and three on a trey by senior Bradley Benson. Freshman Aidan Berrong made his first varsity appearance for the Indians with the honor of playing along with his senior brother, Evan, in the closing minutes and had an assist on Benson's trey.

Scoring leaders for the game for the Indians were Moss with 15 points, Davenport with 14, Bradshaw with 13, Berrong with 9, Travis with 8, and Cowart with 6 while leaders in assists were Davenport with 6 and Bradshaw and Moss with 3 each. Leading in rebounds were Davenport with 9, Cowart and Travis with 7 each, and Moss with 6. The Tigers were led in scoring by senior Jamecus Cox, who included the five first quarter Commerce treys among his 26 points, and junior Jalen Dorsey with 10.

As of the newspaper deadline, the Indians are scheduled to continue to participate in the Region 8-A Tournament this week. As the fifth seeded team from the north sub region, they are scheduled to face fourth seeded Athens Christian from the south sub region for a quick rematch of Friday's game on Monday of this week at 5:30 pm in Commerce. The winner of that game will face Lakeview Academy on Tuesday at 8:30 with the winner of that game to play again at 8:30 pm on Friday in Commerce with a spot in the region championship game at 7:30 pm on Saturday on the line.

Baseball/softball registration

Recreation baseball/softball: We will offer the following age groups: Co-ed T-ball ages 5 - 6, Coach's Pitch ages 7 - 8, 10 and under, 12 and under, 14 and under. Registration will run through February 16th. Visit townscountyrec.com to sign up. TJ0117.F15H

Davenport reaches two additional monumental scoring milestones

By Jerry Kendall
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Towns County Indians senior Zach Davenport has made a habit of reaching great personal milestones during this season and he achieved two additional ones on consecutive baskets last Friday against Athens Christian in a game played at Prince Avenue Christian School due to renovations being completed at the Athens Christian gym.

Davenport reached the 1,000 points scoring total early in his team's first game of this season and has since scored a career high 39 points in a single game on the Indians' home court against Hebron Christian and then surpassed the verifiable career scoring total of 1,366 points held for forty three years by Indians superstar Eddie Rushton.

Lady Indians and Indians reaching 1,000 career points have routinely been honored for decades but your reporter has recently realized that scoring 500 points during a single season is much less common than scoring 1,000 during a career. With this in mind, it can be reported that Davenport scored his 500th point for this season on a field goal at the 1:36 mark of the second quarter against Athens Christian on Friday.

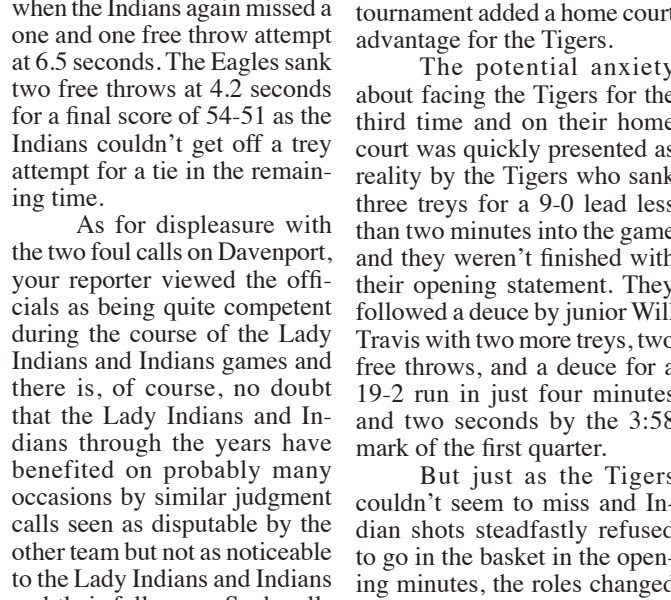
With the 500th point, he became only the sixth Indian player known to reach this total while just seven Lady Indians are known to have achieved this feat. Prior Indians reaching this total are Bob Bryson (during the 1955 season), Bruce Wilson (1962), John Nations (1965), Eddie Rushton (1975), and Heath Hooper (2005).

Lady Indians reaching the magic total of 500 points during a single season are Bonnie Huggins Nicholson (1952),

Pat Hooper Smith (1961), Amy Allen Silvey (1985 and 1986), Brandy McNabb Warren (2000), Blair Barrett Burch (2005), Nikki Winn Kendall (2008 and 2009), and Stephanie Patton (2013).

Pat Hooper Smith was in attendance at the game at Athens Christian and witnessed Davenport's achievement. As an additional bit of information, Eddie Rushton is a first cousin once removed of Bob Bryson and Heath Hooper is the nephew of Pat Hooper Smith.

Davenport was not finished with achieving noteworthy accomplishments with the 500th point of the season last Friday as on his next field goal at the 7:40 mark of the third quarter he reached the 1,500 career points mark. He is the first verifiable Indian to reach this total but, as in the case of his passing Eddie Rushton as the verifiable career scoring leader, it seems to be certain



that the aforementioned Bob Bryson would have surpassed 1,500 points during his senior year of 1956.

Congratulations are once again extended to Zach Davenport for these and many other noteworthy accomplishments, not only in basketball, football, and baseball, but as a top notch student and citizen as well.

port for these and many other noteworthy accomplishments, not only in basketball, football, and baseball, but as a top notch student and citizen as well.