

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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## Indians' season ends with losses to Riverside Military, Georgia Military College

By Jerry Kendall  
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A marvelous season came to an end last week for the Towns County Indians varsity basketball team when Riverside Military Academy of Gainesville and the affiliated high school team from Georgia Military College in Milledgeville pulled away in the last half of each game to take victories over the Indians.

The loss to Riverside came in the finals of the Region 8A Tournament in Commerce while the loss to Georgia Military came in the first round of the Class A Public State Tournament on the Indians' home court.

Towns County school officials placing the TCHS teams in the Georgia High School Association many decades ago would no doubt be shocked to see that the Indians faced two military type schools after the very likely expectation that they would face teams from small counties and towns of similar populations and similar numbers of students.

And it is interesting that during the completion of an eight year period of a public and private Class A split for postseason play of public and private schools that Riverside Military Academy would be considered private and Georgia Military College public with your reporter having no knowledge of how these differing designations were made.

Although disappointing to see the Indians season come to an end, there will always be great memories of a very successful and very young team with no members much over six feet tall against a very challenging schedule with their opponents usually featuring at least one and often more than one member in the 6'4" to 6'6" range. And appearing in the region championship game and the state tournament can be quite a challenge with these events being first time occurrences for this year's Indians while both Riverside and Georgia Military had the experience of playing in region finals and state tournament games last year.

The great memories for the Indians will especially include winning the twenty sixth annual Battle of the States Tournament, holding the tie breaker in finishing in a tie for second place among eleven teams in regular season region play, and taking ten wins in eleven games prior to the losses last week. And both games last week were more competitive than the final scores would indicate as late scoring runs by both Riverside Military and Georgia Military extended their leads by several points.

Further, this year's team joins the 2017 Indians team as just the second since the 1975 season to win more than sixteen games in a season with the 2017 squad finishing with a 19-10 record and this year's team with an 18-9 tally while playing two fewer regular season games. And this year's team was the first since 1981 to reach the region tournament championship game after the 1974 and 1975 teams accomplished this feat with the 1975 squad winning the region championship.

It is interesting to note that Charles Cunningham was a member of the 1974 team and the second leading scorer as a senior on the 1975 team and he is the grandfather of Indians middle school eighth grader



The Towns County Indians finished second at the Region 8-A Tournament and hosted the first round of the Class A Public State Tournament. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Tanner Cunningham. And Mike Shook, the father of Lady Indian freshman Sarah Shook was the leading scorer for the Indians on the 1981 team.

**Riverside Military Academy 65, Indians 49** – A field goal by sophomore Kyle Oakes got the Indians a 2-1 lead at the 7:22 mark and another deuce by Oakes at the 4:48 mark had them within 9-5 but cold field goal and free throw shooting along with a some early turnovers against the aggressive Riverside defense had the Eagles leading by a 13-5 score on a field goal at exactly the four minutes mark.

At this point, however, the Indians got off on a scoring surge of their own as an old fashioned three point play by junior Kolby Moss got started what would become a 16-2 run for a 21-15 Indians lead at the 6:16 mark of the second quarter. An Eagles deuce followed Moss's three point play but a trey by junior Luis Quijada and a deuce by sophomore Collin Crowder during the final minute and a half of the first quarter had the Indians within 15-13 entering the second quarter.

Deuces by Crowder and junior Aidan Berrong were followed by two more deuces by Oakes for the aforementioned 21-15 Towns lead and a free throw by Moss and a trey by Berrong almost matched a deuce and a trey by the Eagles for a 25-20 Indians lead at the 2:34 mark.

But field goal and free throw struggles by the Indians at the foul line would return after that with Riverside finishing the quarter by using two field goals and five for six free throw shooting in a 9-1 run for a 29-26 lead at intermission.

The Indians in a similar manner to five for fourteen free throw shooting in the third quarter of their previous game win against Lakeview Academy sank just four of thirteen free throw attempts in the first half of this game before significant improvement in the last half.

The Eagles appeared to be taking control of the game at the start of the third quarter when they opened with a 10-2 run interrupted only by a drive and reverse layup for two points by junior Colton Day for a 39-28 Riverside lead at the 4:53

mark.

But the Indians rallied again by using a trey by Crowder and two deuces and two for three free throw shooting by Moss to pull to within 45-37 after three quarters. And when Day struck for a trey and Moss sank two free throws by the 6:21 mark, the Indians were within 45-42.

In view of the Indians' field goal and first half free throw struggles along with more turnovers than usual, it can be viewed as quite a tribute to the Indians that they were able to be within 45-42 nearly two minutes into the fourth quarter.

Unfortunately, they would see Riverside embark on one of those explosive scoring bursts experienced on a number of occasions by both the Indians and Lady Indians and by their opponents this year as the Eagles suddenly struck with six straight free throws at the start and four more at the end of a 20-2 run between the 6:05 and 1:12 marks for a 65-44 advantage. A deuce and two for two free throw shooting by Moss and a free throw by junior Reace Hampton would reduce the final Riverside margin of victory to 65-49.

Scoring leaders for the Indians were Moss with 18 points, Oakes with 9, Crowder with 8, and Berrong and Day with 5 each while Berrong and Oakes led in assists with 4 each and were followed by Crowder with 2. Leaders in rebounds were Crowder and Moss with 6 each, Day with 4, and Oakes with 3 while leaders in steals were Oakes with 3 and Crowder with 2.

Riverside was led in scoring by Shad Dabney with 22 points and 6'6" senior Bryce Klacynski with 12 points. Dabney, a junior, is a highly regarded football player said to be in a University of Georgia targeted position with much interest by UGA head coach Kirby Smart and a number of other Division I schools. The Eagles improved their record to 15-11 with the win and got a bye into the Class A Private State Tournament with the region tournament win. They will host North Cobb Christian of Kennesaw in their first state tournament game this Wednesday.

**Georgia Military Col-**

**lege 77, Indians 57** – The Indians got off to a good start against Georgia Military when two free throws by sophomore Kyle Oakes got them a 2-1 lead at the 6:43 mark of the first quarter and a free throw and two field goals by sophomore Collin Crowder had the Indians leading 7-3 by the 5:10 mark.

But the Indians field goal shooting would go stone cold for awhile after that with Georgia Military striking between the 4:52 mark of the first quarter and 6:32 in the second for a 16-2 run and a 21-11 lead. The Indians would regain their footing after that, however, for a strong finish in the second quarter.

Oakes had provided the Indians' only field goal during the potent Bulldogs scoring run and he and Crowder struck for baskets at the 5:58 and 5:25 marks of the second quarter for just a 21-15 Towns deficit. The Bulldogs then sank a pair of treys and followed two free throws by junior Kolby Moss with another trey for a 35-23 lead at the 2:33 mark but Crowder sank four free throws in four attempts and Oakes two charity tosses in two attempts during the final 1:12 of the quarter for just a 35-29 Indians deficit at intermission.

Two free throws by Aidan Berrong and field goals by Moss and junior Colton Day more than matched a trey by Georgia Military at the start of the third quarter with the Indians edging to within 38-35 at the 5:44 mark only to have the Bulldogs strike for eight straight points and a 46-35 lead at the 2:54 mark.

The Indians again had an answer, however, as a basket by Oakes, two free throws by Berrong, and a field goal by Crowder accounted for a 6-2 run and just a seven points deficit of 48-41 at the 1:13 mark. Moss then matched a Bulldog deuce for a 50-43 score at thirty six seconds with the Indians still knocking on the door.

Georgia Military would sink a deuce at the fifteen seconds mark for a 52-43 lead entering the fourth quarter and the first eight points of the fourth quarter for a 60-43 lead at 6:02 in appearing to be taking control of the game.

The Indians were not through, however, as two deuc-

es by Moss before and deuces by Berrong and Moss following a Bulldog basket had the Indians back within striking distance at 62-51 at 4:01 and the deficit was still eleven points when Berrong matched an old fashioned Bulldogs three point play with a trey at 3:15 for a 65-54 score at the 3:15 mark.

The Bulldogs would strike for a 12-3 finish interrupted only by a deuce and free throw by Oakes, however, in pulling away for a deceptive 77-57 win when considering the competitiveness of the game until that final scoring run from the 3:01 mark until the end of the game.

Scoring leaders for the Indians were Moss with 16 points, Oakes with 15, Crowder with 13, and Berrong with 11 while Oakes took the lead in

assists with 6 and in steals with 4 and Berrong and Day had 1 blocked shot each. Rebounding leaders were Crowder with 9, Berrong with 5, and Moss and Oakes with 4 each. Very similar and outstanding free throw shooting was present for both teams in this game with the Indians sinking 18 of 22 attempts and the Bulldogs 17 of 22 attempts.

Scoring leaders for Georgia Military were junior Preston Kent with 29 points and freshman Christian Burnett with 21. The Bulldogs improved their record to 16-8 against a very challenging schedule and in a very strong region. With the win, they travel to Dooly County High School in Vidalia for second round play on Wednesday of this week.

## Six TCHS basketball players receive Region 8-A recognition

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Three Towns County High School Lady Indians and three Indians basketball players were honored by region coaches as All Region 8A as a reward for their play during the just completed 2020 basketball season.

The coaches within the region can vote for players on all teams except for those on their own team in choosing those to be honored.

Indians junior Kolby Moss was selected as a first team member of the boys all region team and Lady Indians junior Vanessa Floyd was chosen as a second team member on the girls team.

Lady Indian senior Sophia Shook and junior Kennedy Henson were selected for honorable mention on the girls all region team while junior Aidan Berrong and sophomore Collin Crowder received honorable mention on the boys team.

A season ending injury to Henson on January 21 cost her exposure to some region coaches and likely resulted in her losing some votes which may have lifted her to

a higher honor.

This article gives an opportunity to mention that Kolby Moss this year became only the second Indian known to score as many as 600 points in one season.

Although records are no longer available, your reporter is certain while being involved in the activity of the team as clock operator that year that Bruce Wilson achieved this milestone during his senior year of 1962 in twenty nine games.

Moss wound up with 625 points in twenty seven games this year and finished the season with an average of 23.1 points per game.

Congratulations are extended to these outstanding Lady Indian and Indian athletes for their accomplishments from this reporter and the Towns County Herald.