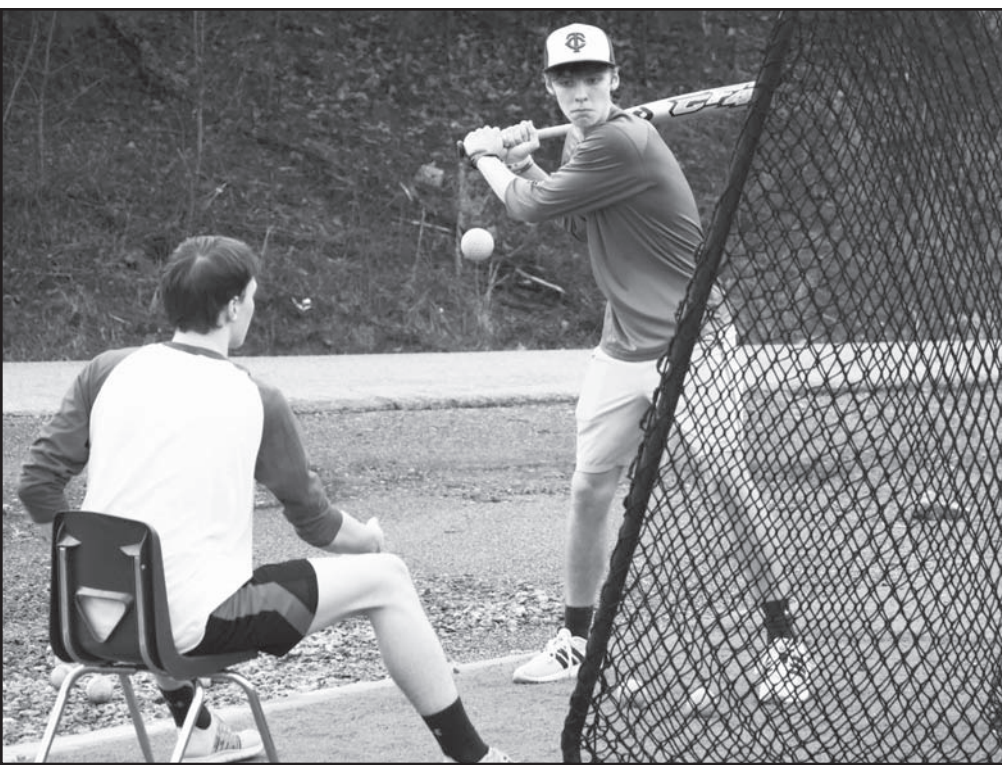


Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Baseball: 2020 Season begins this week before tournament in Savannah



Mason Yeomans soft tosses to True Youngblood during TCHS baseball practice. Photo/Chad Stack

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

With winter sports coming to a close, the full roster of the 2020 Indians Baseball Team began practicing hard last week in preparation for the Indians' season home opener on Feb. 24, which occurred after press time.

After finishing 9-14 last year and 0-10 in one of the most robust Single-A Regions in the state – currently made up of nearly 10 private schools – the Indians have elected to play a non-region schedule for the upcoming season, Head Coach Shannon Floyd said.

“We chose to drop our region schedule a year early,” Floyd said. “We graduated seven seniors last year and were 0-10 in region play. We are very young this season – we can play more local teams that are public schools, and in my opinion, it was the best decision for this team.”

With the Indians electing not to play in a region, they will not be able to qualify for the state tournament this year, Floyd said.

Starting in the fall of 2020, Towns County High School will be entering a new region, where student-athletes will compete with other public schools.

“Our expectations are to grow and mature as a team and also as young men,” Floyd said. “We will be very young, as we only return one senior and two juniors off last year’s squad.”

Leading the Indians this

year is senior Jacob Kinsey, who is the lone returning senior from the 2019 season.

“He will pitch and play one of the corner positions,” Floyd said. “We will rely on his leadership to grow as a team.”

“Aidan Berrong and Noah Wolf are our two returning juniors. Aidan led our team in hitting last season. He will be needed to do that again and improve on that and other parts of his game.”

“Collin Crowder and Brack Burrell will be sophomores this season and played valuable innings last year for us.”

Losing last year’s ace on the mound, Seth Fullerton, to graduation, Floyd said there are a few players now vying for the top pitching spot on the team, with several returning players who saw time on the mound last year.

“Crowder pitched the most out of our returning players,” Floyd said. “Aidan has a great arm. Cabe Poston will be a crafty left-hander. And Caleb Berrong, a freshman, will get lots of opportunities.”

Berrong and Crowder lead the Indians at the plate with offensive stats, but Floyd said he is looking for Kinsey, Burrell and Cook to make huge strides with the bat this season.

Floyd said another benefit of a non-region schedule is that several eighth-graders will receive the opportunity to get some playing time in with the varsity team once their season ends.

The middle school players are getting quality instruc-

tion by Coach Chris Vardo, Floyd said, which will benefit the varsity program in the future. Already, the middle school team is projected to have a great season.

“These boys love baseball, and most have played upper-level travel baseball all over the Southeast,” Floyd said. “That experience will prove to be invaluable as they continue to grow.”

“However, with great expectations comes great sacrifice. If they work hard with the guys we have on varsity this year, great things could be possible for Towns County Baseball. We all have to work.”

Floyd has coached several of the middle school baseball players, one being his own son Zane Floyd, who is an eighth-grader this year and has the chance to unite with his father on the baseball diamond at the varsity level after the closing of his season.

“I am excited to work with my son and his classmates again on a team, but we have work to do this year with the varsity squad,” Floyd said. “I am excited for all these young men; he and his peers love this game. It will truly be a blessing to get that chance to work with them as a unit again.”

The Indians hosted Riverside Military Academy of Gainesville on Monday, Feb. 24, at 5:30 p.m. after press time.

Following their home opener, the Indians will take to the road for a match in Greene County on Wednesday, Feb. 26, and then head to Savannah for a three-day tournament.



The TCMS Indians practice fielding drills indoors. Photo/Chad Stack

NASCAR 2020

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Logano Wins In Vegas

LAS VEGAS, NV - A late caution and a miscue on pit strategy in Sunday's 267 lap Cup Series race allowed Joey Logano to get his first win of the season.

Logano took the lead after a restart on lap 226, after Chase Elliott spun. He lost the lead to teammate Ryan Blaney on lap 253. Blaney appeared to be in control of the race and had pulled away from the other leaders. During lap 256, Logano had dropped back to third behind Alex Bowman.

The race's last caution came during lap 261 after Ross Chastain, who was substituting for Ryan Newman spun. Blaney, Bowman, and Kevin Harvick, who was running one spot behind Logano, pitted for fresh tires. Logano's team wanted him to pit. His crew chief Paul Wolfe told Logano to come to pit road for new tires. Logano didn't hear Wolfe on the radio and remained on the track.

There were just two laps of racing left when the green flag was given. Logano was in the lead, followed by William Byron, Matt DiBenedetto, and Ricky Stenhouse Jr.

Logano was pushed to the front, followed by DiBenedetto, and Byron.

Right after taking the white flag, there was a series of spins and wrecks. This brought out the caution, freezing the field and ending the race.

“Clean air was going to be key with old tires,” Logano said. “If I got swallowed up by a couple cars, I was just going to fall backwards really quick. I was able to get out in front and then be able to separate myself a little bit from the field.”

Runner-up Matt DiBenedetto tied his career-best finish.

“This is all just too surreal,” he said. “Tough to be that close, but, hey, this is only the second race of the season. So it was the strength of this team. It’s so cool to have the backing of all the people that allow me to drive this thing.”

Stenhouse was third, followed by Austin Dillon, Jimmie Johnson, Bubba Wallace, Brad Keselowski, Kevin Harvick, Kyle Larson, and Ty Dillon.

Blaney was leading when the caution came out and ended up finishing 11th. His crew put four tires on the car during the pit stop so not only did he have to restart behind the seven cars that didn't pit, he also had to start behind the few cars that took only two tires.

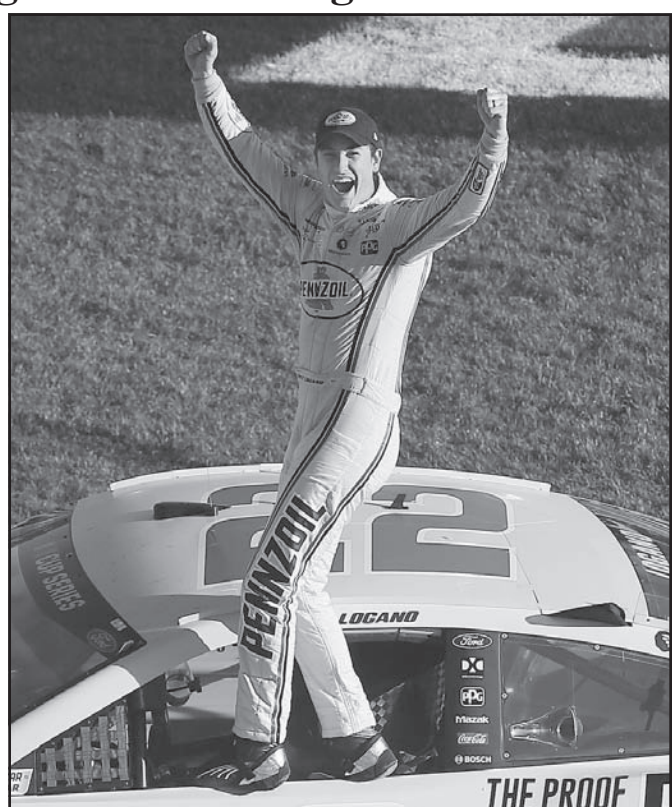
“It was just a crappy situation,” Blaney said. “We fight our butts off to get the lead there from third and get it. I had a good shot of holding [Bowman] off. I thought we could have once we got in clean air I thought our car was pretty decent. The caution came out and we pitted, some guys didn't, some guys took two and we just end up getting absolutely destroyed.”

Chase Elliott, winner of both stages of the race had a tire go down on lap 220. He spun, brushed the wall and had to pit twice. The first time was for tires and on the second time, his team put tape on his rear quarter-panel. He finished 26th after leading five times for 70 laps.

Top-10 leaders after 2 of 36: 1. Blaney-85, 2. Logano-82, 3. Harvick-81, 4. Larson-70, 5. Stenhouse-66, 6. Elliott-65, 7. A. Dillon-63, 8. Buescher-61, 9. Hamlin-60, 10. DiBenedetto-60.

Results of the NASCAR Las Vegas Xfinity Series race: 1. Chase Briscoe, 2. Austin Cindric, 3. Ryan Sieg, 4. Noah Gragson, 5. Harrison Burton, 6. Brandon Jones, 7. Michael Annett, 8. Justin Allgaier, 9. Riley Herbst, 10. Ross Chastain.

Results of the NASCAR



Logano Wins In Vegas

Las Vegas Truck Series race: 1. Kyle Busch, 2. Johnny Sauter, 3. Austin Hill, 4. Matt Crafton, 5. Ben Rhodes, 6. Zane Smith, 7. Todd Gilliland, 8. Tanner Gray, 9. Stewart Friesen, 10. Sheldon Creed.

RECORD PURSE AT DAYTONA 500

In 2016, NASCAR quit releasing race purses and prize money information. Since then, teams have been reluctant to discuss their winnings for fear of reprisal from the sanctioning body.

This past week, in an apparent policy change, NASCAR released the Daytona 500 race purse, a record-setting \$23.6 million to be distributed among the 40 drivers. This purse is the highest in American motorsports history, according to a NASCAR press release.

In 2015, the Daytona 500 purse was \$18 million.

In a story by Sporting News, the 2015 winner, Joey Logano, earned about \$1.6 million, approximately 8.8 percent of the total purse.

If the 2020 edition has a similar share, the winner of this year's Daytona 500 will take home about \$2.06 million. It would likely be the first NASCAR race to award the winner over \$2 million.

At the 2020 Daytona 500, teams made between \$2.06 million and \$365,000. Other races historically have a much lower payout structure, with earnings between \$320,000 and \$78,500 in the 2020 season.

Other Racing News: The events leading up to the Daytona 500 are known as Daytona Speedweeks. It features racing in all three of NASCAR's major series, plus some lesser races.

When the final checkered flag was given this year, Ryan Newman was sliding upside down across the finish line.

He has since been released from the hospital and expected to be O.K.

Newman's Daytona 500 crash reminds us of the fragility of life in a dangerous sport. But why are most of us attracted to the dangerous side of life?

The attraction to motorsports, whether it be NASCAR, IndyCar, Formula One or local racing, isn't about the sounds or the smells or even the speed and the danger.

We love the excitement that gets our adrenaline going. For a short time it does away with the hum-drum existence that we experience for much of our lives.

We are both thrilled and scared. Racing makes us

scream, smile and cry, often all at once. Like a great movie or a perfect piece of music, the thrills associated with racing takes us out of our daily routine, like preparing our income tax, and into the world of feelings.

And what about the drivers, the ones that take the risks in order to provide excitement for the fans?

It sounds crazy or illogical, and the risk outweighs the reward, but race car drivers have defied the odds time and time again. These are not special people, they're just people who believe they can do something and set out to accomplish their goal.

It's important to remember that for those drivers who take the risks, it can be rewarding. Denny Hamlin, winner of this year's Daytona 500 took home over \$2 million. For that kind of money, there will always be risk-takers.

And as long as you and I have boredom traveling along with us every day, we will show up to watch these daring people try to win the big prize.

Racing Joke: Jimmie and his wife are sitting at the breakfast table talking and sipping their second cup of coffee before he has to leave to go to the race car shop. “I just dreamed that you gave me a beautiful diamond necklace. What do you think it means?” his wife said.

“You'll know tonight,” Jimmie said.

That evening, he came home with a small package under his arm and gives it to his wife.

Delighted, she opens it to find a book, titled, “The Meaning of Dreams”.

Weekend Racing: The Cup and Xfinity teams are at the 2-mile Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, Calif.

Sat., Feb. 29; Xfinity Series race 2 of 33; Starting time: 4 PM ET; TV: FoxSports1.

Sun, Mar. 1; Cup Series race 2 of 36; Starting time: 3:30 PM ET; TV: Fox.

Racing Trivia Question: Who was the first woman to qualify for the Daytona 500?

Last Week's Question: At which track did Richard Petty get his last win? Answer: His last win came July 4, 1984 during the Firecracker 400 at Daytona. He beat out Harry Gant and Cale Yarborough with Pres. Ronald Reagan in attendance.

Gerald Hodges is a syndicated NASCAR writer and author. His books may be viewed and ordered online at Amazon.com. You may contact him by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com.