

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Indians race past Irwin County 61-55 in Class A Public Elite 8

It required just 15 seconds for the home-standing Irwin County team to sink a trey for a 3-0 lead, but a trey by senior Aidan Berrong just 20 seconds later at the 7:25 mark of the first quarter got a tie for the Indians and a tough first quarter battle was on its way.

The Indians got three different leads during the first quarter of 5-3 on a field goal by junior Kyle Oakes, 7-6 on a basket by junior Collin Crowder, and 15-14 on a trey by senior Kolby Moss at the 27-second mark with a deuce by Moss extending the advantage to 17-14 at quarter's end.

Scoring leaders for the quarter were Moss with six points and Oakes with four.

Irwin County opened the second quarter as they had the first with a trey, this time 17 seconds from the start for a 17-17 tie but the Indians went on a 14-4 run after that for a 31-21 lead at intermission. A basket by Moss at the 6:29 mark for a 19-17 Towns advantage started the run with junior Jake McTaggart including an old fashioned three point play among seven points and Berrong putting a punctuation point on the quarter with a trey as time expired in extending the lead to ten points.

The persistent Irwin County team continued to challenge the Indians, however, as they opened the third quarter with a basket off a loose ball and an inadvertent bank shot for a 31-25 deficit less than a minute and a half into the quarter but the Indians had an answer until near the end of the quarter. Berrong's third trey, two free throws by McTaggart, and baskets by Crowder and senior Hayden McClure had the Indians leading 40-29 at the 3:27 mark.

And when Irwin struck for a trey and a deuce for just a 40-34 deficit Crowder nailed a trey for a 43-34 Indians lead at the 2:38 mark. Further, an Irwin deuce for a 43-36 score was followed by two deuces by Berrong and a free throw by Oakes for what would be the Indians' biggest lead of 48-36 at the 30.9 seconds mark.

What gave an appearance of the Indians gaining control of the game did not come to pass, however, as Irwin sank a trey and a deuce during the final 24 seconds of the third quarter for just a 48-41 deficit



L-R: Towns celebrates an Elite 8 win at Irwin County. Jake McTaggart releases a fade-away jumper during the third quarter at Chattahoochee Co. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

entering the fourth quarter. They then took advantage of uncommon ice cold shooting by the Indians with several Towns shots missing the mark off the front of the rim by continuing a scoring run begun at the end of the third quarter for a 13-0 overall run and a 49-48 lead on a trey at the 4:13 mark of the fourth quarter.

The cold shooting by the Indians was further complicated by foul problems for the Indians' towering and very athletic McTaggart, who has not been prone to foul problems, with aggressive play by the smaller but very quick Irwin County squad rarely resulting in fouls but light touch or incidental contact by McTaggart resulting in foul calls on him. It appeared to quite a number of observers an attempt by one of the officials especially to get him out of the game.

This apparent effort led to his fourth foul at the 6:35 mark of the fourth quarter and his fifth at the 4:05 mark, just eight seconds after Irwin took the 49-48 lead. A check back through all of the games played this season shows that McTaggart fouled out of just one other game and had four fouls in just two others with all three of these games being decisive wins for the Indians.

As when dynamic Indians point guard Kabe Ellis was lost to injury in the second quarter of the region championship game, however, the other Indians rose to the occasion for the remainder of that game and continuing in his absence. A free throw by senior Colton Day got them even at the 3:31 mark and an old fashioned three point play on an inbounds pass from Moss to Crowder at the 2:46 mark got the Indians a 52-49 lead they would not relinquish although have challenged into the final minute of play.

After Irwin sank two free throws for a 52-51 Indians lead, a free throw by McClure got one of those points back at 2:04 and a long deuce by Berrong at 1:43 extended the Indians lead to 55-51. Crowder came up with a huge defensive stop at the 1:26 mark by taking a charge by an Irwin player and Moss followed this clutch play by sinking two free throws at the 1:16 mark for a 57-51 Towns advantage.

Irwin would cut the margin to 57-53 on two free throws on a questionable call at 1:07 and add a deuce after an Indians turnover to edge to within 57-55 at the thirty five seconds mark but that would end their scoring for the game.

Moss would sink two crucial free throws at both the 26.3 and 14.7 marks for a 61-55 Towns lead that would become the final score and place the Indians in the State Final Four for the first time in Indians history.

They joined the Lady Indians who reached the milestone on three occasions between 2000 and 2013 under the direction of current TCHS athletic director Jim Melton.

Scoring leaders for the game for the Indians were Berrong with 15 points, Moss

Final Four ... from Page 1A

with 14, Crowder with 12, McTaggart with 11, Oakes with 5, and McClure with 3 while leaders in assists were Moss with 8, Day with 3, and Berrong with 2.

Leading in rebounds were McTaggart with 11, Moss with 10, Crowder with 8, McClure and Oakes with 4 each, and Berrong with 3 while McClure and Oakes led in steals with 2 each, and Crowder led in blocked shots with 2.

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Benyard with 18 points, Derrick Taylor with 15, and John Jones with 13. Irwin County, also known as the Indians, completed the season with a 20-5 record after opening the season with three losses while shorthanded as their football team won the Class A Public state championship.

They had compiled a 20-1 record following the three losses, including sixteen straight wins and they were a perfect 14-0 at home prior to the loss to our Towns County tribe of Indians.

Crowder and two points from senior Hayden McClure.

Moss snagged 11 rebounds, followed by nine from Crowder and seven from McTaggart. Berrong finished with four steals and one block, followed up by McTaggart, who had a steal and three blocks of his own.

The Indians will travel to Macon on Saturday, March 13, to take on the defending GHSA Class A Public Basketball State Champions, Hancock Central from Sparta, at 12:30 p.m. at the Macon Centreplex Coliseum. Tickets can be purchased via <https://www.ticketmaster.com>.

Basketball: Region honors galore bestowed on Indians and Lady Indians

Moss named 8-A Player of the Year; Benson receives Coach of the Year nod

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The end of the Region 8-A Public high school basketball season brings about the presentation of awards for stellar performances by players and strong leadership by coaches as chosen by the coaches within the region who can vote for members of all teams in the region except their own.

Although it would be difficult to come up with a list of honored players from the past and, yes, coaches as well it seems likely that more Lady Indian and Indian members have been honored this year than in any other prior year.

The player of the year award must be considered

the top of the line accomplishment in each of the female and male groupings and Indians' senior guard Kolby Moss has received this honor for his outstanding play for the Indians during the 2020-21 season. And Indians head coach Rob Benson has been recognized as the coach of the year for boys teams competition.

In addition to Moss and Benson being honored, four additional Indians and three Lady Indians have received recognition.

Ladies will be mentioned first now with Lady Indian seniors Vanessa Floyd and Kennedy Henson both being selected as first team members and senior Abby Mauldin as honorable mention.

On the Indians side, junior Jake McTaggart was

chosen for first team honors, senior Kabe Ellis for second team, and senior Aidan Berrong and junior Collin Crowder for honorable mention.

Sincere congratulations are extended from the Towns County Herald and this reporter to all of these Lady Indians and Indians for the recognition received for their numerous accomplishments and the enjoyment they have presented to their school mates, their school, and the many fans who have enjoyed following their careers.

And special appreciation is extended to all of the teammates of these honored athletes who could not have received these honors without their presence and support during the year.

