

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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## Baseball: Indians overpower Commerce, swept by Washington-Wilkes

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After notching a 14-7 victory over the Commerce junior varsity squad last week, the shorthanded Indians dropped both games of a doubleheader to Washington-Wilkes by a combined score of 25-3.

**Indians 3, Washington-Wilkes 10** - In the opener vs. Wilkes, the Indians were unable to overcome seven-straight Tiger runs out of the gate, eventually falling 10-3 despite allowing just three hits.

Towns County pitching was plagued by seven errors as starter Drew Sofield fanned 10 batters, allowed two walks, a hit batter and one earned run in 3 1/3 innings. Kade McConnell entered in relief, tossing 2 1/3 hitless innings but surrendered four unearned runs Brack Burrell worked the final 1 1/3, giving up one unearned on one hit.

A Tanner Cunningham RBI single in the fifth accounted for the Indians' only hit, breaking up Nathan Durham's no-hit bid following two walks to open the frame. Towns County's three runs were courtesy of Caleb Berrong,



Cale Kirby pitched 3 2/3 innings to go with 3 hits at the plate vs. Commerce. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Cunningham and Burrell, all coming during a three-run fifth. McConnell added an RBI groundout in the inning.

The fifth-inning rally, trimmed the Wilkes' lead to 7-3 after the Tigers scored once in the second and fourth innings, two in the third and three in the fifth to open up a seven-run advantage.

Wilkes extended its margin to 8-3 during the top of the sixth, and 10-3 in the seventh.

Stone Chauncey walked twice and was hit by a pitch. Berrong, Connor Chastain and Cale Kirby drew one base on balls apiece. Cunningham was hit by a pitch and stole a base. Burrell also swiped a bag.

**Indians 0, Washington-Wilkes 12** - The nightcap was all Washington-Wilkes in a 12-0, six-inning victory. The Indians were out-hit 9 to 1 and committed four errors, helping the Tigers seize a 5-0 lead in the second inning.

Burrell walked and singled during a 1 for 2 night at the dish, eventually ending Robert Hunt's

no-hitter with a sixth-inning infield single. Hunt struck out 12 and walked three in a one-hit, six-inning shutout.

His counterpart, Zane Floyd, went 2 innings, giving up five hits and four earned runs. Chauncey spelled Floyd in the third, working 3 innings and striking out four. He surrendered three hits, a walk and two earned. Colton Garrett took the mound in the sixth and allowed two earned on three walks and a hit.

Sofield and McConnell each drew a walk for Towns.

**Notes:** Washington-Wilkes (5-3) is currently just outside the Georgia Dugout Club's (GDC) Class A Public Top 10 poll.

**Indians 14, Commerce JV 7** - The Indians rallied from an early 4-0 deficit with four in the second and five in the third, en route to a 14-7 victory.

Kirby went 3 for 3 with 2 runs, 2 RBIs and a walk as the 6-9 hitters in the Towns County lineup accounted for 8 ribbies and five of the team's seven hits.

Trailing by four in the second, the Indians roared back to even the score before Commerce snatched the lead away with one in the third. Towns County stormed ahead for good with a 5-spot in the bottom half of the frame, then

tacked on five more in the fifth for a 14-6 advantage.

Kirby got the nod and allowed three earned runs on five hits over 3 2/3. McConnell fanned three and walked one in 1 1/3 hitless innings. Chauncey struck out the side but allowed one unearned run in the sixth. Chastain nailed down the win with two strikeouts during a scoreless seventh.

A patient Indians lineup helped itself to 11 bases on balls, including two apiece by Sofield and Chastain, who stole a base and scored twice.

Floyd, Berrong and McConnell each turned in a 1-for-3 day at the plate with McConnell scoring twice and knocking in two. Berrong added two runs, two steals and an RBI; Floyd scored a run and drove in another.

Michael Houser went 1 for 4 with a run and 2 RBIs. Eli Phillips knocked in two; Cunningham scored twice, Sofield and Chauncey each added one ribby.

Towns County could field a full roster when region play resumes at 5 p.m. Wednesday in Social Circle - another program knocking at the door of the GDC's Top 10.

The series shifts to Hiawassee on Friday for a 5 p.m. twin bill.

## State Champions... continued from Page 1A

other hand, Hancock Central had a nucleus of their top players returning from last year's team which not only compiled a 28-3 record but had the experience of winning the Class A Public state championship in that same venue.

The start of the game, however, revealed quickly that the Indians were ready to play, evidently not noticing the potential intimidation of a huge venue and thousands of fans in the stands. And as the game proceeded, they followed a pattern established during the season of achieving an early lead and having an answer for each challenge by their opponents while playing a very challenging schedule but with Hancock Central having a reputation of coming from behind for victories.

Hancock Central got the first basket for a 2-0 lead at the 7:02 mark of the first quarter, but baskets by juniors Jake McTaggart and Kyle Oakes got the Indians their first lead of 4-2 at the 6:28 mark, and the Indians got leads of 6-4, 8-6, and 10-8 on baskets by Oakes and seniors Kolby Moss and Aidan Berrong in that order by the 4:36 mark.

A putback basket and a trey by Hancock Central got them a 13-11 lead at the 1:28 mark, but a deuce by McTaggart and a free throw by junior Collin Crowder had the Indians leading 14-13 at the 12.5 mark only to see the Bulldogs claim a 16-14 lead on a trey at the first quarter buzzer.

The Bulldogs lead wouldn't last long, however, as baskets by Berrong and Moss had the Indians leading 18-16 at the 6:37 mark of the second quarter. A deuce by the Bulldogs got them an 18-18 tie, but baskets by Crowder and Berrong and two free throws by McTaggart put the Indians up 24-18 at the 3:48 mark.

The Bulldogs responded with three deuces for a 24-24 standoff which was their last tie as it turned out at the 1:45 mark. An old-fashioned three-point play on a drive to the basket by Moss got the Indians a 27-24 lead they wouldn't relinquish, and putback baskets by Crowder and McTaggart extended the lead to 31-24 at intermission.

Hancock Central wouldn't go away the last half, but the Indians would have answers to every challenge, as had become a pattern on many occasions

against a very challenging schedule. The Indians claimed four third-quarter leads of nine points with the last being by a 39-30 score at the 4:26 mark.

A four-point play on a trey and free throw and another trey got the Bulldogs within 39-37 at 2:26, and they matched an old-fashioned three-point play by McTaggart for just a 42-40 deficit at the 1:40 mark.

The Indians got the lead back up to 45-40 at the end of the third quarter, however, on a free throw by McTaggart and a pull up jumper at the buzzer by Moss. And they got off to a good fourth quarter start on two quick baskets by Oakes off a steal near midcourt and drive to the basket, and on an inbounds pass from Moss that had the Indians back ahead 49-40 at the 7:13 mark of the fourth quarter.

The Bulldogs however wrapped a pair of treys around three free throws by Crowder when fouled on a trey attempt and added a deuce in pulling to within 52-48 at the 5:24 mark, but a basket by McTaggart and two by Crowder got the Indians a 6-2 scoring run for a 58-50 Indians lead at the 3:24 mark.

Once again Hancock rebounded by using two deuces and a trey interrupted only by a McTaggart basket for just a 60-57 deficit at the 1:48 mark, with the added difficulty of Moss having been lost on fouls at the 1:56 mark. But the Indians did what they have done so often this year and rose to the occasion on drives for baskets by Berrong and McTaggart at the 1:34 and 49 seconds marks for a 64-57 lead.

That would end the scoring for the Indians for the game but it would be enough with a trey at the 10 seconds mark by the Bulldogs only serving to reduce the final score to 64-60 and a state championship for the Indians. Crowder and Oakes claimed vital defensive rebounds after Bulldog misses during the final 1:02 of the game in completing marvelous all-around games for the two juniors.

McTaggart took the scoring lead for the Indians with 22 points and got lots of help with Moss adding 14, Crowder 12, and Berrong and Oakes 8 each, while leaders in assists were Oakes with 4 and Crowder and Moss with 2 each. Leaders in rebounds were Moss with 13, McTaggart with 11, and Crowder with 8, while Oakes led in steals with 2 and Crowder had the only

blocked shot.

Hancock Central held a slight edge of 43-41 in rebounds but the Indians feasted on offensive rebound putback baskets, scoring 14 points on six field goals and two free throws when fouled on a putback attempt. There was a striking difference in three-point shooting in the game as the Bulldogs sank nine treys, but it required 40 attempts against tough defense by the Indians. The Indians sank no treys but probably wisely attempted only seven shots from long range with depth perception probably more difficult for long shots in the wide-open spaces of the huge and unfamiliar venue.

The stats used here came from Hudl, an entity which does the stats for the Indians on a regular basis with a tiny bit of difference than provided to major media by the Macon Centreplex. It is quite noteworthy, however, that the Centreplex stats showed the Indians leading in the game for 25 minutes and 52 seconds, Hancock Central leading for just 1 minute and 23 seconds, and the two teams were tied for 4 minutes and 45 seconds.

The Bulldogs were led in scoring by seniors Marquavious Lawrence and Leroy Wilson with 18 points each and Jamal Taylor with 16. The Bulldogs completed their season with a 15-2 record after having the previously mentioned delay in games played for a lengthy period due to COVID-19. Their only loss other than to the Indians was in their Region 7A by a 64-61 score at perennial state-level power Wilkinson County.

Major kudos and applause are extended from the Towns County Herald and this reporter to the Indians for providing one of the most memorable seasons that could be possible in winning the Region 8A Public regular season and tournament championships and topping this off with the Class A Public State Championship. And it certainly would have been quite a difficult task for any team to have prevented the Indians from winning their second straight Battle of the States Tournament if it had not been sidelined by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Time to Say Goodbye - Perhaps the most difficult moment for any athlete at the high school or other levels of play is the realization that their career at that level has come to an end. This realization is compounded

by the fact that the final game for seniors is certain to be a loss with, of course, the exception of being a state champion, as post season play is set up in Georgia with this being a wonderful reality for the Indians this year. Fortunately, there are numerous more pleasant memories to override the times when the final game is a loss such as for the Lady Indians with the ability for players and their supporters to recall those occurrences more vividly as time passes.

The recent Lady Indians state tournament loss at Georgia Military College in Milledgeville marked the final appearance for seniors Vanessa Floyd, Kennedy Henson, Abby Mauldin, Maci Walls and Jayce Young. And the state championship victory by the Indians in the Macon Centreplex was the last basketball appearance with the Indians for Aidan Berrong, Colton Day, Kabe Ellis, Reace Hampton,

Liam King, Jordan Lovelace, Hayden McClure, Kolby Moss and Luis Quijada.

Much appreciation is extended to these student athletes who have provided countless hours of hard work in serving their teams on the basketball court while coming up through the ranks in representing various teams such as at the recreation, middle school and high school levels. In reality, the often-intense action fans see on the court during games represents just a tiny percentage of the time and effort to achieve various accomplishments along with much time and monetary expense required for their families for many years, including of course prior to their high school careers.

Individual and team accomplishments have been addressed for these players in articles in the Towns County

Herald with these articles being available in the archives on the newspaper's website at www.townscountyherald.net for those who would like to pursue viewing the coverage of some quite notable accomplishments now or in the future.

Many thanks are extended from the Towns County Herald and this reporter to these seniors for their many hours of dedicated and highly regarded service to their teams, school and community.

Whether star players or backup performers, each player can be proud of the effort they have given to developing their skills and especially their support of their teammates, whether on the court or from their most admirable cheering the teammates on from the bench. Best wishes are extended to each of these seniors for the future.

## TCHS Men's Basketball team thanks community



Towns County High School Men's Basketball team

The Towns County Men's Basketball team would like to give a BIG THANK YOU to everyone who supported them this season in what has been nothing short of an incredible history making season for the men's program! From coaches, to the teachers and staff at the school, to drivers to and from games, to parents, families, and alumni for cheering and attending the games, to local businesses and the Sheriff's office for the es-

corts, this team thanks each and every one of you!

The churches, Enotah, McConnell, and Macedonia fed the team during the regular season. Moore Insurance Services and Chatuge Custom Homes sponsored the Region Championship Celebration. Brown Haven Homes sponsored a charter bus to the Final 4. Carrion Tree Service and these businesses helped contribute to state playoff expenses: Jacky Jones Superstore,

Marco Turner, Mary's Southern Grill, Parker Oil, Moss Forestry Consulting Services, Barrett Insurance, State Farm Insurance, Mountain Realty, Happy Hawg BBQ, Carolina Concrete and Mike Kelly and Cristy's Salon and Spa, along with many other donations through Go Fund Me.

Support and generosity have been greatly appreciated and we hope we have made our community proud to be a Towns County Indian! (TOMar17,F3)SH