

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

www.townscountyherald.net • E-mail: tcherald@windstream.net

Baseball: Indians thump Basin, suffer heartbreaking sweep to SCHS

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Towns County picked up an 11-1 victory at Copper Basin, TN on Monday, March 15 but dropped three-straight to Social Circle over the weekend for a 5-8 overall record and a 3-5 region mark.

Region 8-A action resumes this week with the Indians taking on No. 7 Commerce in a three-game series beginning Tuesday in Hiwassee. The series shifts to Commerce on Friday for a 5 p.m. double-header.

Indians 11, Copper Basin 1 (six innings) - Towns County used a 4-run third and a 3-run sixth to put the Cougars away behind a strong road outing from starting pitcher Cabe Poston.

The Indians' starter fanned three over 4 innings, scattering 9 hits, walking one and allowing one earned run. Zane Floyd pitched 2 innings in relief, striking out three and giving up one hit.

At the plate, Caleb Berrong went 3 for 4 with four stolen bases, two runs, an RBI and a walk. Kade McConnell turned in a 3-RBI performance, going 2 for 3 with a double, two steals, a walk and a run.

Mason Yeomans drew three bases on balls, stole four bags and scored twice. Tanner Cunningham also walked three times, drove in one, stole a base and scored.

Towns struck in the top of the first when Brack Burrell doubled and scored on a two-out single from Berrong.

After the Indians ended the Basin half of the inning with a 4-6-3 double play, Stone



L-R: Connor Chastain and Drew Sofield at the plate for Towns County during last weekend's Social Circle series. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Chancey made it 2-0 when he singled and scored to leadoff the inning.

The bottom of the second ended with an untraditional 4-3-2 twin killing and Towns County broke things open with 4 runs in the third to take a 6-0 advantage. A bases-loaded walk to Yeomans started the scoring, followed by a bag-clearing double by McConnell.

In the fourth, pinch-hitter Aidan Berrong made it 7-0 with a run-scoring groundout, but the Cougars finally got on the board with a double and a two-out RBI single. The Indians got that one back in the fifth when Cunningham scored Floyd with a bases-loaded walk.

Leading 8-1 in the sixth, Yeomans singled and scored to start the frame. Later, McConnell and Drew Sofield both walked and scored to build an 11-1 margin.

Floyd worked around a leadoff triple in the bottom of the sixth to slam the door and end the contest after six innings.

Indians 0, Social Circle 1 - The Redskins pushed across the game's only run in the top of the sixth to escape Hiwassee with game one of the series.

Sofield fanned 11 in 6 2/3 innings, allowing 7 hits, a walk and one earned. Collin Crowder tossed 1/3 of an inning in relief - facing two batters and fanning one.

A leadoff single set the stage in the Redskins' sixth; and following a wild pitch and a strikeout, Social Circle delivered a go-ahead double to right field before Sofield sat down the next two batters.

The Indians had their chances, however, stranding two runners in the sixth after a Floyd walk and a single by



Connor Chastain had them in business until a 6-4-3 double play ended the inning.

After the Redskins left a pair aboard in the seventh, an error kept hope alive for Towns County in the bottom half of the inning. But with one on and one out, a would-be base-stealer was cut down at second to squash any late momentum.

Indians 2, Social Circle 14 - In the second game of Friday's twin bill, the Redskins took a 2-0 lead into the sixth before exploding for seven in the sixth and five more in the seventh.

McConnell allowed 2 unearned runs in 4 1/3 innings and departed in the fifth with a 2-0 deficit. Unfortunately, Social Circle combined for 12 runs (nine earned) off Layne Rouse and Connor Chastain as each reliever worked 1 1/3 innings.

Meanwhile, Redskins' starter Jason Ball fanned 13 over 6 innings, taking a no-hitter into the sixth where Floyd broke up the bid with a one-out single.

Towns County's runs came in the seventh via a two-run single by Kyle Oakes after a one-out double by Burrell set the table and Cunningham was plunked with two down.

Indians 5, Social Circle 7 - Towns County was unable to secure the road win on Saturday, botching a 5-2 fifth-inning lead.

Crowder struck out nine over 4 2/3 innings, walking four, allowing 2 hits and 3 unearned runs. Postin surrendered 6 hits and 4 unearned runs in 1 1/3 innings. Overall, Indians pitching was plagued by five fielding errors.

Aidan Berrong went 2 for 4 with a double, 2 runs and

2 ribbies. Chancey finished 2 for 3 with a run and one RBI.

Aiden Berrong reached on an error and scored in the first but Social Circle quickly evened things up courtesy of a base hit and an infield error. A wild pitch allowed Social Circle to take a 2-1 lead during the second but Towns County responded with four in the fifth.

Chancey opened the scoring with an RBI single even the game at 2-2. After a 2-run double by Aidan Berrong made it 4-2, he came around to score on a passed ball to push the Indians' advantage to 5-2.

A two-out RBI single in the Redskins' half of the inning trimmed the Towns County lead to 5-3. However, the Indians missed a golden opportunity to put the home team away after the first two batters reached to start the sixth. But a costly out on the basepaths, followed by back-to-back strikeouts prevented Towns County from padding its two-run lead.

Social Circle regained the lead with four in the bottom of the sixth when a one-out error allowed the Redskins to load the bases. A base hit made it a 5-4 game and a sacrifice fly tied things up. With two down, the Indians had a chance to escape with a 5-5 score but two more RBI singles shoved them into a 7-5 hole.

A one-out single by Burrell in the seventh brought the tying run to the plate, but a line-out to second base and a quick throw to first ended the contest on a 4-3 double play.

Caleb Berrong, Chastain, Floyd and Oakes all chipped in one hit each for Towns County, who out-hit the Redskins 9-8.

TCHS Basketball: A sports trip down memory lane (Part One)

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

First of all, just wow, what a season.

Hearty congratulations are extended again to all of the Indians and Coaches involved in winning a state championship in basketball and many thanks are extended to the fans who have provided such great support throughout the season made very difficult at times by the Covid 19 virus but with a surviving mentality present for this team throughout the season.

A number of trips down memory lane have been made over a period of many years and suggestions have been made to do this again as related to this season and connections of players, coaches, and administrators are numerous.

Apologies are extended for the length of this presentation as it has developed but the reality is that it just scratches the surface of the interesting actions taking place involving Lady Indian and Indian teams and players, with this being especially true in successes of descendants of past players over so many years.

The vast successes of this year's Indians team and a very successful season by the Lady Indians as well have brought about a number of specific questions about prior years of play by the teams such as the first times the TCHS teams reached desirable levels such as region championships, sweet 16, elite eight, and state final four achievements. In the future, similar questions are certain



to be asked about the Indians' Class A Public State Basketball Champions of 2021.

Some of the achievements of the past and when and how they were achieved will be explored in the following paragraphs. It would require a lot of space to address all of the specific achievements so mostly brief information is all that can be included in this article.

There are many descendant connections among various teams presented and they will be explored to some extent but limited pretty much here to current and recent player descendants of the mentioned players of the past.

Perhaps additional descendants will be addressed in any future trips down memory lane. And any readers inter-

ested in additional historical information are invited to inquire of your reporter for whatever information that may be available, primarily related to basketball, from a vast array of historical items.

The First TCHS Sweet 16 Team - Although the expression of Sweet 16 was probably quite a number of years away at the high school level at that time, the 1966 Towns County Indians basketball team indeed made it to the final 16 in Class B in Georgia during that post season but not to the state tournament under a different format of just four regions and four sub regions with just two teams from each of the four regions making it to state.

Each sub region would hold a tournament with the

top two teams from each then participating in a region tournament with eight teams in competition in each region for a total of thirty two teams still in contention for a state tournament appearance.

The Indians qualified for the region tournament by defeating Union County on a last shot at Rabun Gap in the sub region semifinals before falling by something like a 68-61 score to East Fannin, a team in the final year of pretty dominant play for three years in Region 4B, Area 1. So the Indians made it to the region tournament among thirty two teams to compete for a state tournament berth.

Kyle Moss, a great uncle of Kolby, scored twenty points in the sub-region tournament win over Union County

and Dwight Berrong, the grandfather of Aidan, scored thirty one against East Fannin while William Dyer, a great uncle of 2017 Indians graduate, sank the winning basket against Union County. De Vries reached one thousand career points and was a vital member of the 2017 state tournament team.

In the region tournament, the Indians faced Lovett of Atlanta, a state ranked team, in their first round game and came away with something like a 45-41 win in qualifying as one of the final 16 teams remaining in the state and one win away from what now would be considered an Elite Eight group but then one of only eight teams entering the state tournament.

The Indians then faced

another state ranked team in Oconee County on the Oconee home court in the semifinals and missed the state tournament by just one point in a 51-50 loss to the home standing team. But readers may wonder how good was Oconee County? They went on to win two games in the state tournament and finish as Class B state runnersup to Waynesboro.

The accomplishments of that 1966 team are most remarkable when considering that seven quality seniors, two from the 1964 team and five from the 1965 team including thousand points scorers Terry Gribble and John Nations, had graduated from the previous two teams which compiled records of 24-6 and 20-7. Moss had been a two year starter and Berrong had become increasingly productive as a junior in 1965 but with no other players available with any significant amount of varsity experience.

Juniors William Dyer, Jimmy Hooper, and Dwight McNabb were elevated from the Indians B-Team (now called JV's) and top flight senior baseball player Jerry Nichols returned after sitting out a year or two from basketball and this team compiled a remarkable 17-12-1 record. That's right, they had a home court tie against, if memory serves correctly, Gilmer High School when curfews of 10:00 pm and then later 10:15 pm were applied on nights before school days.

It wasn't too long before the decision was made to start games on these nights at

See *Memory Lane*, Page 3B