

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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## Hunnicuttabbed as Benson's replacement with Indians basketball

By Todd Forrest  
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Towns County Lady Indians head basketball coach Brian Hunnicutt will move over to the men's program where he will serve in the same capacity in 2021-22 following the retirement of head coach Rob Benson.

Hunnicuttabbed as Benson's replacement with Indians basketball program during the 2016-17 season when long-time head coach Jim Melton retired after nearly two decades at the helm. And after replacing one legend five years ago, Hunnicutt is now tasked with replacing a coach that led the TCHS basketball program to its only state title before riding off into the sunset with a championship ring.

"I'm very grateful for this opportunity, but I will never be able to fill Rob Benson's shoes," Coach Hunnicutt said. "He did a phenomenal job and I'm just hoping that we can build upon and maintain the success that Coach Benson had during his career."

Fortunately, before taking the Lady Indians' job, Hunnicutt spent much of his coaching career at Rabun County under Lady Cats' head coach Dee Dee Dillard, where he witnessed first-hand how a



Brian Hunnicutt (standing-left) coaches up his Lady Indians during a contest at Towns County High School. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

program reloads year-after-year following region titles and deep playoff runs.

"I learned [at Rabun] that once the expectations are there, it ignites a passion in the younger players, and that's what is so great about Towns winning the championship this year," he said. "That's the reason that Rabun can reload every year, it's because they are winning state champion-

ships in 11-year olds, 12-year olds, the middle school is winning, and that's what we hope to accomplish at Towns.

"If we can start getting interest from the younger kids, we'll have kids ready to step in and fill the shoes whenever we have a senior class like the one we just had."

Coach Hunnicutt also hopes to start a travel team in Towns County and plans

on meeting with the parents before the end of the school year.

"I would like for us to start something like that up here so our kids aren't having to leave the county to play basketball outside of the season," he said.

In the short term, Coach Hunnicutt is hoping for a return to the pre-2020 summer camp schedule, and that

includes a few days of basketball at Towns County High School.

"We plan on playing June basketball," he said. "We're getting everything sorted out right now and we hope to host some teams at Towns County. It's all coming together late because we're waiting for the go-ahead from some of the colleges [that host summer camps]. But lately,

I've been receiving emails from a few colleges about openings, when before, it was just high schools talking with one another."

While Hunnicutt is excited to roll up his sleeves and get to work with the men's program, he realizes there are two sides to every coin and his current situation is no different. And that moment came last Tuesday -- a day after taking his new job -- when he was forced to say goodbye to his Lady Indians' players.

"It was difficult for sure and it was definitely bitter-sweet," he said. "I'm excited for the opportunity but sad for the girls. It's always tough when you tell a group that you're moving on, but the majority of [the upcoming team] are freshmen and sophomores. The timing helped a lot, because if this had taken place last year, where I had five seniors that I'd coached the whole time, it would have been much more difficult."

Since replacing Melton in 2016-17, Hunnicutt has compiled a 46-79 overall record at Towns County while going 27-29 in region play. However, over the last three years, the Lady Indians are 19-13 in Region 8-A with two state playoff berths. In their two postseason trips, Towns County is 2-2 with a pair of second-round appearances.

## Baseball: Towns County strands 19 runners in losses at Commerce, Union

By Todd Forrest  
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Towns County's bats fell silent during a pair of losses last week, beginning with a 13-2 defeat at Union County on Monday that saw the Indians leave 10 on base and finish 1 for 5 with runners in scoring position.

Later in the week, Towns County (6-16, 3-12) stranded nine runners during Thursday's 2-0 loss at No. 8 Commerce. Despite out-hitting the Tigers 4-2 behind a complete game from Drew Sofield, the Indian bats failed to deliver in the clutch as they dropped their seventh-straight outing.

**Indians 0, Commerce 2** - Scoreless in the bottom of the third, Sofield plunked the leadoff batter then watched helplessly as a one-out error moved two runners into scoring position, allowing Commerce to grab a 1-0 lead with an RBI ground out.

After a pair of first-inning walks by Collin Crowder and Stone Chauncey were left stranded, along with base hits from Kyle Oakes and Sofield in the second, the Indians failed to capitalize on a two-out single from Crowder in the third.

A strikeout and a pop-up left two Indians stranded in the fourth, then Aidan Berrong was hit by a pitch and Zane Floyd walked to begin the fifth. Unfortunately, a ground out and two strikeouts ended the Towns County threat and Commerce eventually stretched its lead to 2-0 in the sixth.

The Tigers took advantage of a leadoff walk that came around on a two-out single after a wild pitch moved the runner into scoring position.

Berrong worked his way aboard in the seventh via a one-out walk, but consecutive strikeouts ended the threat and the game.

Connor Chastain, Crowder and Sofield each finished 1 for



Collin Crowder leads from first during the first inning at Union County. He finished the day 1 for 2 with a run. Photo/Todd Forrest

3 with Crowder swiping a bag. Oakes ended his day 1 for 2 with a sacrifice bunt, and Berrong reached twice and stole two bases.

**Indians 2, Union County 13** - A first-inning grand slam by Union County senior Hunter Loyd spotted the Panthers a 4-1 advantage, which proved more than enough for junior left-hander Lake Hughes, who surrendered 2 hits and struck out six over 4 innings.

Despite facing a deficit for much of the game, Towns County saw plenty of chances to tighten the score but could not deliver a timely RBI.

After the Indians left the bases loaded in the first, a leadoff error and a one-out hit batter set the table for Loyd's slam.

A two-out error in the second and a two-out walk in the third cracked the door for the Indians to cut into the three-run deficit, but an inning-ending ground out retired the side in each instance.

Two fielding errors in the bottom of the third helped the Panthers build a 6-1 advantage. However, the Indians answered by moving two runners into scoring position with one down in the fourth but only came away

with one run. One-out walks to Chauncey and Sofield allowed Berrong to plate a run with a base hit to left. Later in the fourth, Crowder drew a two-out walk that brought the tying run to the plate, but a fly out to left kept the score at 6-2.

A two-out double stretched Union's lead to 7-2, but Towns put two on base in the fifth off junior reliever Thomas Dyer, only to strand both runners after a nine-pitch at-bat concluded with an inning-ending strikeout.

The Panthers put up a 6-spot in the fifth to end the game at 13-2, courtesy of three singles, two doubles, a walk and an error.

Aidan Berrong finished 1 for 3 with an RBI. Crowder went 1 for 2 with a run, Tanner Cunningham walked and drove in a run during a 1 for 2 day. Connor Chastain drew two bases on balls. Chauncey and Sofield walked once; Caleb Berrong was hit by a pitch in the first inning.

Zane Floyd gave up 5 hits and 3 earned runs in 3 innings. Chauncey allowed 6 hits and 6 earned in 1 1/3.

The Indians host Lincoln County at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday. The series shifts to Lincoln on Friday doubleheader at 5 p.m.

## Soccer: Towns County men end regular season with rout of Washington-Wilkes

By Todd Forrest  
Towns County Herald  
Sports Editor

After a region-title clinching victory on Tuesday, the Indians capped off the regular season with an 8-0 blowout of Washington-Wilkes.

Peyton Barrett finished with his second-straight four-goal haul while dishing out two assists. With eight goals in his last two matches, the senior forward now has 29 on the year.

Jenson Brown collected the brace with two goals and one helper and is one assist shy of reaching 10 for the season. Jordan Lovelace added one goal and one assist; Garrett Oakes also chipped in one assist.

State Tournament action gets underway next week for a hungry Indians squad that includes nine seniors that potentially missed postseason play due to the 2020 season's cancellation.

"Last season showed potential for sure, but it was also the first indication that we could play on this level," he said. "I feel that missing last season took from us the opportunity to have had more experience and



Senior Peyton Barrett beats a defender for one of his eight goals during last week's final week of the regular season. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

growth as a team. That affected everyone though. That being said, we do have the capability to play at the state level. We can contend with the best. We have nine senior players. As a result, we have placed our focus on making the most of our final season."

"We talk about what that means as a team and set milestones to attain. This is the most all-around athletic class to come out of Towns County in my memory. I try to remind them that they could solidify that notion with another TCHS state title within the same year."

## VFW Golf League news

The Veterans Golf League plays every Thursday morning at Chatuge Shores Golf Course. The league is open to all veterans who are members of the VFW or American Legion and their auxiliaries regardless of post affiliation. The course is in great condition and this week's winner was the team led by Steve Crayton. Team members contributing to the victory were Gary Nicholson, Bill Scott and Larry Schwalm. Congratulations! TRAP21.G1)SH

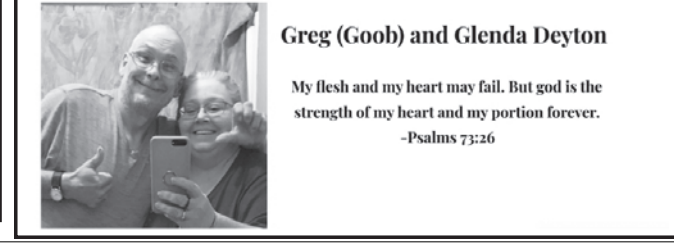
## Deyton 5K Fun Run/Walk

**When:** Saturday, May 8, 2021 (9 am to 1 pm)

**Where:** Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds

**Details:** Show your love and support for Greg (Goob) as he is fighting neuroendocrine cancer. After Southwire closed its doors, Greg lost his job and his medical insurance. All proceeds will help pay for doctor appointments, hospital visits and medicines.

- Charity 5K Fun Run/ walk at 9 am pledge of \$30 which includes a shirt! If you would like a t-shirt, please fill out the order form by April 28 using the QR code
- Gospel music/singing (lower campground pavilion)
- Silent Auction (crafts, jewelry, baked good, etc)
- Photography by Aviera - 15 minute mini session of 3 images for \$15 donation
- BBQ plates will be sold for lunch starting at 11 am for \$8/each



Greg (Goob) and Glenda Deyton

My flesh and my heart may fail. But god is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. -Psalms 73:26