

Towns County Sports

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Lady Indians and Indians fall in preseason scrimmage games at Rabun Gap

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DILLARD - The Towns County Lady Indians and Indians Varsity Basketball Teams travelled to the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School in Rabun County last Saturday afternoon for quite challenging preseason scrimmage games.

These games will not count as related to the teams' end of season records nor are the individual statistics compiled in the game included in the season totals.

Regular season play is scheduled to begin this week for the Lady Indians and Indians with games at Nantahala, North Carolina, on Tuesday at 6 p.m. and at Hiwassee Dam, North Carolina, on Friday at 6:30 p.m.

The Towns teams will then host Union County in their home openers next Tuesday, Nov. 19, at 6 p.m.

Rabun Gap is a private boarding school with a very distinct international flavor and standout basketball teams playing in a North Carolina based private school conference with the other schools in the conference based in and around Asheville.

They were members of the same sub regions as the Lady Indians and Indians for many years prior to leaving the Georgia High School Association after having increasing numbers of distant boarding students.

The very young Towns teams faced not only the challenge of top notch teams playing on their home court but the added challenge of the Rabun Gap teams having already played prior scrimmage games with the widely recognized anxiety of their first game of the season together as a team already experienced.

Both Rabun Gap teams used decisive scoring runs in taking victories over the TCHS teams with the Lady Eagles taking quick control of the game in the first quarter and the Eagles using a hot start in the third quarter in pulling away from just a two points lead at intermission.

Lady Indians 36, Rabun Gap 70 - Rabun Gap struck for three treys less than two and a half minutes into the game and included another trey in building a 15-0 lead by the 3:44 mark of the first quarter.

A drive for two points and a trey by Sophia Shook, the Lady Indians' only senior, at the 1:38 and 1:12 marks got the Lady Indians within 15-5 but the Lady Eagles closed out the quarter with a deuce and their fifth trey for a 20-5 lead at quarter's end.

The Lady Eagles went on to lead 37-14 at intermission and 53-27 after three quarters on the way to a 70-36 victory.

Highlights for the Lady Indians the final three quarters included a trey among six points for junior Kennedy Henson in the second quar-



Kennedi Henson drives to the basket during the scrimmage at Rabun Gap. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

ter, treys by juniors Abby Mauldin and Jayce Young and sophomore Emily Vargas in the third quarter, and four points by junior Vanessa Floyd, who missed quite a bit of playing time with foul problems, in the fourth.

Nine different Lady Indians entered the scoring column during the game with leaders being Henson with 8 points, Floyd and Shook with 6 each, and Mauldin with 5.

Five different Lady Indians collected at least one assist with leaders being Floyd, Henson, and Young with 2 each according to your reporter's unofficial tally.

Lady Indians not mentioned above but dressed for the game and seeing action were junior Maci Walls and freshmen Tabitha Barnes, Payton Calvert, Jenna Durham, Eden Hill, Brooke Murrell, Morgan Pierson, and Sarah Shook.

Calvert and Shook are newcomers to the school with Shook being the daughter of former Indians standout basketball player Mike Shook of the TCHS Class of 1981 with his senior team pulling a major upset of Buford in the region semi finals in earning a trip to the Class A State Tournament.

Scoring leaders for the Lady Eagles were sophomore Quincy Ji with 15, senior Aileen Marquez with 11, and senior Kyleigh Overton with 10. Six different Lady Eagles combined to sink 12 treys with excellent accuracy during the game.

It is interesting to note the capabilities of the Lady Eagles as compared to last year's team. They lost just one senior who failed to score a single point last year and

one productive junior did not return but they have added the two leading scorers against the Lady Indians as shown above.

They finished last year with a 12-13 record against a very challenging schedule with one of the losses being by just a 76-73 score in double overtime to Lakeview Academy, the regular season and tournament champions of the Lady Indians' Region 8-A who finished last season with a 25-5 overall record.

Indians 61, Rabun Gap 77 - The first half of the Indians and Eagles game was a real battle with the Eagles holding mostly small leads but one advantage of 15-7 for nearly ten minutes at the start of the game.

The Indians would claim a pair of leads during the final 6:05 of the quarter, however, as junior Kolby Moss forced a 21-21 tie at that point and a deuce by junior Aidan Berrong got them a 23-21 lead at 5:44.

After the Eagles struck for a 9-1 run and a 30-24 advantage, Moss sandwiched two treys around two free throws for an 8-0 Indians run between the 2:40 and 1:27 marks for a 32-30 Towns lead.

The Eagles responded, however, with field goals at the 57 and 17-second marks for a 34-32 lead at intermission.

One of those runs that can't adequately be explained but is a common occurrence at times during a season came in the first seven and a half minutes of the third quarter.

Several Indian shots appearing destined to fall in the basket found a way to roll or bounce off the rim

while the Eagles completed a 20-6 run interrupted only by two deuces by sophomore Collin Crowder and two free throws by Moss for a 54-38 Rabun Gap advantage at the 33-second mark.

But Moss would strike for a deuce and a trey during the final 12 seconds of the quarter in getting the Indians within 54-43 at quarter's end and deuces by Moss and Crowder following an Eagles deuce got the Indians within single digits with a 56-47 score at the 6:19 mark of the fourth quarter.

That would be as close as the Indians could come, however, with the Eagles' strong run at the start of the second half proving to be too much to overcome despite the addition of a pair of treys by Moss and two more deuces by Crowder as the Eagles came away with a 77-61 victory.

The Indians were led in scoring for the game by Moss with 34 points, Crowder with 12, junior newcomer to TCHS Drew Hodge with 6, and Berrong with 5 while leaders in assists were Moss with 4, Hodge and sophomore Kyle Oakes with 3 each, and Berrong with 2 according to your reporter's unofficial tally.

Indians not mentioned above but seeing action in the game were seniors Jacob Kinsey and Ali Moran; juniors Reace Hampton, Seth Kinsey and Luis Quijada; sophomore Cabe Poston; and freshman Caleb Berrong.

The Eagles were led in scoring by senior Solomon King with 25 points, junior John Tastinger with 16, and junior N'fari Benjamin with 11.

As in the case of the Lady Indians' game against



Jacob Kinsey looks for room to operate. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Rabun Gap, it is interesting to look at this year's Eagles team as compared to last season. They lost several seniors from last year's team which compiled a 15-16 record against a very competitive schedule but have a strong presence returning.

Indians fans will recall the team's historic home court 95-84 victory last year over Region 8A foe Lakeview Academy, a team which went on to win the region tournament championship, but Rabun Gap also claimed a victory over the Lions by an 82-73 score in Gainesville.

Lakeview wound up with a 20-9 record against a very challenging schedule. The Eagles also registered two victories over Union County and one over Franklin, North Carolina, with Union sporting a 17-11 record and Franklin an 18-8 record for the season.

A brief trip down memory lane - Although I don't believe he was suggesting that the information be placed in the newspaper, it might be of interest to readers to have a brief visit down memory lane as Dwight Berrong mentioned to your reporter that this was his first trip to the Rabun Gap gym since he appeared there with the Indians in the championship game of the Region 4B Area 1 Sub Region Tournament in 1966.

Berrong is the grandfather of current Indian first cousins Aidan and Caleb Berrong and your reporter distinctly recalls that Dwight scored 31 points in a loss to East Fannin by something like a 68-61 score in that championship game.

The senior laden East

Fannin team was quite a power for some three years to that point with an excellent group of players.

There were just four regions with four sub regions in each region in those days with just the top two teams from each of the four regions making it to the state tournament.

The Indians went on to the region tournament at Oconee County following the sub region tournament and defeated state ranked Lovett of Atlanta before facing the state ranked Oconee team on their home court.

The Indians just missed what would have been the school's first state tournament appearance in a 51-50 loss to the Oconee team which went on to defeat Southeast Bulloch and Vienna in the first two rounds of the Class B State Tournament before falling to Waynesboro in the championship game.

Further, the Indians were coached that season by Bill Kendall, the grandfather of current Lady Indian junior Vanessa Floyd and middle school Indian Zane Floyd.

There was a second Indians connection included in the Rabun Gap games. Chet Kendall of the TCHS Class of 1988 was one of several officials splitting time in the two games.

He was a first team all state player on the Indians' 1988 state championship baseball team, scored over one thousand points in basketball, and had a very noteworthy season as a quarterback in football but in other seasons bypassing football and concentrating on baseball and basketball.

