

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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## Wrestling: Indians hoping to claim prestigious 'King of the Mountain' title

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Towns County Wrestling will host its annual King of the Mountain Tournament on Friday, Dec. 6, and Saturday, Dec. 7, inside the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center at Foster Park.

For more than 15 years, Towns County has been home to North Georgia's largest and most exciting wrestling tournament. Indeed, the annual tournament is one of the largest sporting events in the region, period.

Each year, schools from surrounding states enter to grapple in a two-day tournament for the ultimate title of "King of the Mountain."

After an Eighth-Place finish in last year's tournament, the Indians are looking to wrestle their way to the Top Spot to take the title from 2018 champs West Oak High School out of South Carolina.

The tournament will allow several of the young up-and-coming wrestlers to get some much-needed time in on the mats, Head Wrestling Coach Jeff Stowers said.

About half of the team



Towns County Wrestling will attempt to improve on last year's Eighth-Place finish at King of the Mountain. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

will compete in junior varsity matches, while returning wrestlers like juniors Alisa Moss, Garrett Oakes, Austin Edrington and Matthew Ledford will grapple in hopes of winning the tournament.

The years of success from

the Indians Wrestling program under the leadership of Stowers have sparked the interest of several young kids who have never wrestled before, and Stowers is excited about the middle school wrestling program starting back this year after a five-year hiatus.

Middle School Wrestling Head Coach Evan Woodard is doing a great job with those kids, and the middle school team will allow for kids to get some experience and learn what it takes to be grapplers, Stowers said.

After middle school, Stowers and his coaching staff will continue to develop each wrestler as he or she enters the varsity ranks.

There have been lady wrestlers for some time in the state, but new to wrestling last

year was the addition of an all-girls state tournament. Since then, the wrestling team has added Lady Indians Bazya Smith and Lindsey Giles.

The Indians have been grappling for just over a month now and have competed in three matches, and Stowers said they are getting better and improving every day.

Currently, 26 schools from Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina are expected to compete in this year's tournament, which always brings in hundreds of wrestlers and their family members to the area.

This in turn is good for the local economy, as people stay in the hotels here, eat at the local restaurants, and shop in the stores, offering a financial boost to the region when tourism may be down over the warmer months.

Tournament weigh-ins will begin at 4 p.m. on Friday with wrestling starting at 5 p.m., and second-day grappling will commence at 9 a.m. Saturday.

Be sure to check out North Georgia's premier high school wrestling tournament over the weekend and support the youth of the county at King of the Mountain Friday and Saturday.

## Towns County High School Fishing Team keeps First Place trophy at home

Sports Special  
Towns County Herald

On Saturday, Nov. 30, 150 high school angler teams lined up at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds ramp to compete at the third Georgia BASS Nation High School competition of the season.

The Towns County Team of Mitchell Grimsley and Adrian Hooper was 109th to leave the ramp, and they arrived at their first spot at 7:38 that morning. Surprisingly,

none of the previous 108 teams chose this same spot.

By 7:59 a.m., Mitchell and Adrian had four fish happily swimming in the live well. The fifth keeper was caught at 10:03 that morning. Then at 2:43 p.m., the team was able to upgrade their bag by catching a 3 1/2 pounder.

As it turned out, this catch helped Adrian and Mitchell win their first tournament of their career.

TCHS finished the day with 15.57 pounds, followed

closely by Clayton Wood and Elijah Benson of Chatuge Anglers with 15.16 pounds. All results can be located at www.gabassnationhs.com.

Mitchell and Adrian wish to thank their sponsors for their continued financial support of the team, as well as the community of Hiwassee for all of the support and well wishes.

Follow the boys on the Towns County Fishing Team Facebook page.



Top: Adrian Hooper and Mitchell Grimsley during their First Place weigh-in at the BASS Nation High School tournament on Lake Chatuge Saturday. Bottom: Hooper and Grimsley appeared in the TCSO Empty Stocking Parade. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

## NASCAR 2019

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

### Crafton Beat The Odds



Matt Crafton 2019 NASCAR Truck Series Champ

Matt Crafton and his No. 88 team managed to capture this year's Truck Series championship without winning a single race.

NASCAR had designed the playoff system to reward winning drivers.

It didn't happen this year, as Crafton defied the odds.

His best finish was a second in the last race of the season at Homestead. The 43-year-old completed without a doubt, the most unorthodox championship in NASCAR history.

It was the first winless championship season in the Truck Series.

But that's not all. Crafton hasn't won since winning the Eldora dirt race in 2017. His last win on pavement came at Charlotte in 2016.

He led only 44 laps this past season.

So how could such a poor performing team take home the series championship?

Before the start of the seven-race playoff, Crafton looked every bit like a real championship contender. He barely scraped into the eight-driver playoff, but he had the best overall average finish in the division at that point.

"In racing, where I come from you put a whole season together to win a championship," Crafton said. "You don't just win one race and flounder around all year to make it to Homestead. You can do that now."

In Craton's case, was this putting a whole season together, floundering around or a little bit of both?

Crafton is the type driver that doesn't care about stats, opinions or negativity. He had back-to-back championships in 2013 and 2014. They were earned with one and two wins respectively. And then he came up short despite winning six races in 2015. And now he's become the first winless champion.

"When they talk about not winning a race and winning the championship, you know what, I'm going to sleep really good all winter long with this trophy because when you win a race, that's very sweet, but usually you only have one week to gloat about it," Crafton said. "But I've got like two and a half months to gloat about this championship before next year."

"You know what we'll say to that? We won the championship. It's just as sweet to be totally honest. Yeah, it would have been great to win some of those battles throughout the year, but we went through a lot and we've had a lot of adversity this year."

"Without a doubt I felt like we should have won some races, but at the end of the day, we're the 2019 Truck Series champion."

**WoO STAR GRAVEL TO ENTER NASCAR**  
World of Outlaws star, David Gravel will begin moving into NASCAR next season.

His itinerary will allow him to compete in a limited schedule in trucks in 2020, according to GMS Racing president Mike Beam.

by Jeremy Elliott of SprintCar-Unlimited.com.

Beam confirmed that the organization began discussions with Gravel last year. Talks picked up last May when the World of Outlaws came to town. Beam says Jeff Gordon was a huge proponent of the driver's potential.

By mid-summer, Beam was testing Gravel at Hickory Speedway in a Super Late Model.

"After a few laps, David was as fast as our other driver," Beam said. "He did great. He's the real deal. He's a Christopher Bell kind of guy."

With 110 employees, GMS has the infrastructure to field several truck teams next year. Beam would also like to test Gravel in an ARCA car at Daytona International Speedway. As is the case with any incoming driver, Gravel would have to be approved by NASCAR prior to competing in the series.

Gravel, 27, finished third in the WoO Sprint Car standings in 2019. Only series champion Brad Sweet's 16 wins topped Gravel's 12 victories.

Gravel said his ultimate goal is to rise through the NASCAR ranks to what is now the NASCAR Cup Series.

"Truck racing part-time isn't a great way to make a living, but I'm looking at the end goal and trying to be that next guy to move up to the Cup level," Gravel said. "I'm motivated. I believe in myself. I believe at 27, I'm the best driver I've ever seen in my life, and I think I'm ready for the challenge."

**NASCAR'S NEW GEN CAR IS COMING**

NASCAR will introduce a new car in 2021, called the Next Gen. The cars will have more of a street car look with unique manufacturer characteristics and feature a stock chassis.

NASCAR is soliciting bids on suppliers for the various stock elements that the new car will have, principally the chassis.

Multiple people familiar with the Next Gen process but who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly told NBCSports.com that there are at least three companies being considered seriously to build the chassis.

That list includes Joe Gibbs Racing, which is one of multiple Cup teams that inquired about bidding on the chassis.

It isn't unusual for a Cup team to build chassis for others (such as Hendrick Motorsports,

Roush Fenway Racing and JGR) have counted rivals as clients. But it would be new to have a single team that builds chassis for the entire field.

"With respect to those that are in the RFPs to build the car, I don't want to get into specifics about where that is," said Steve Phelps NASCAR CEO. "There would obviously need to be a separation between that race team and whatever part of the vehicle itself that's being put together."

Phelps said NASCAR has another test of the new car in a few weeks, and Toyota had a Next Gen body in a wind tunnel last week for the second time.

The purpose of the new car is to limit the cost of competing in the sport for teams, sponsors, and manufacturers.

Phelps went on to say that the racing on intermediate tracks has never been better; ratings are up, bucking a trend among other major sports.

"If you look at the results — I start with the competition always — our competition right now on the intermediate tracks and the superspeedways, I believe, is the best racing we've ever seen. I'll start with myself as a fan. I love watching and am super excited when we get to the intermediate tracks and superspeedways, the type of racing we are going to see."

**Racing Joke:** During the off season, Randy and his wife were attending an old time racers reunion. There is an incredible drunk man slumped across the table from them.

"Do you know that old racer?" Randy asks.  
"Yes," the wife replies.  
"That's my ex-boyfriend. He started drinking right after we broke up, over twenty years ago, and hasn't been sober since."

"Good Lord," Randy replied. "I didn't know it was possible to celebrate that long."

**Television Schedule:** The Annual Cup Series Awards Banquet will be held in Nashville, TN on Thurs., Dec. 5. The awards presentation will be begin at 8 PM ET on NBCSN.

**Racing Trivia Question:** How many Cup teams will Stewart-Haas Racing have in 2020?

**Last Week's Question:** Where is Kyle Busch's hometown? **Answer:** Las Vegas, NV.

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