

Towns County Sports

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Indians win two of three epic home court battles, just miss a third win

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

After playing just two games in the previous eighteen days and none in the prior nine due to bad weather here in the mountains, the Towns County Indians Varsity Basketball Team was in action three times last week with home games on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

But that's not the end of the story as the three games were just the start of a series of six games to be played in nine days with home games this week on Tuesday and Friday and a road trip to Commerce for a weather delayed game on Thursday.

The Region 8-A Tournament will be held next week at Athens Academy, which is actually located in the edge of Oconee County just south of Athens.

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The three games played by the Indians last week provide a prime and most interesting example of how teams having even significantly less success than their opponent can rise up, especially as the season progresses, and be competitive to the point of near victory with the winners of all three games showing signs of taking control of their games but having to battle for their lives at the end.

The Indians completed the week's play with a 9-12 overall record, including 5-5 and in sixth place in Region 8-A.

If those seeing the game or reading now about the close battle for the Indians with George Walton wonder if the Bulldogs have had any prior victories or near victories over capable opponents, the answer is a resounding YES.

For example, they fell to Class AA Riverside Military by a score of 45-42 score in Gainesville and took a 51-47 victory over the Eagles in Monroe with Riverside having a 10-8 overall record against very challenging schedule and including a 6-3 record and in second place in Region 8-AA.

Riverside boasts an early season win over Class AA Wesleyan; a double digits victory over Rabun County, their region's top team; and two double digits wins over region foe Union County, along with just a 61-60 overtime loss to the top flight Class AAA White County Warriors. Wesleyan provides another interesting comparison related to last week's Towns County opponents as they



Photos by Lowell Nicholson

recently took a 48-33 win over Greather Atlanta Christian but just an earlier 51-48 win over Providence Christian, the Indians' Thursday victim. Both Wesleyan and GAC have current records of 14-9 and have both been state ranked this year in Class AA.

Indians 59, Providence Christian 52 – Against Providence, the Indians struck for field goals by sophomores Cole Ledford and Zach Davenport or a 4-0 lead by the 7:18 mark of the first quarter they would hold throughout the game with the exception of a single one point Providence lead early in the fourth quarter.

The visiting Storm, who entered with an overall record of just 5-15 and 3-6 in Region 8A but against a quite challenging schedule, would nevertheless challenge the Indians throughout the game but with the Indians able to respond to the challenge each time.

Davenport, with seven points and juniors Adam Barrett and Will De Vries with six each, led the Indians in first quarter action when they broke away from three leads of just one point the final 4:35 in extending a 10-9 margin to 23-15 the final 4:20 of the quarter.

The Indians appeared to be taking control of the game when Davenport opened the second quarter by wrapping an old fashioned three point play and a trey around a Storm deuce for a 29-17 Towns lead but Providence edged to within 32-30 and then 34-32 by intermission.

When the storm pulled to within 36-35 less than a minute into the third quarter, Davenport, who had contributed eight Indian points in the second quarter, came up with a steal near mid court and basket at 6:01 and added a trey at 5:13 with a putback by junior Major Moss at 4:47 giving the Indians a 43-35 advantage.

Davenport then matched a pair of Providence putbacks with two field goals of his own and the Indians were ahead 47-39 with fifty four seconds on the clock.

The Storm responded, how-

ever, with a trey at twelve seconds for a 47-42 score entering the fourth quarter and struck for two more treys at 7:41 and 7:04 for a sudden previously mentioned lead of 48-47.

The Indians would prove to bend but not break beginning at the 5:46 mark, however, when two free throws by De Vries got them a lead of 49-48 they would not relinquish.

Clutch play would continue for the Indians when Moss came up with an unusual steal near mid court on a long pass from under the Storm basket and took the ball to the basket for a dunk and a 51-48 lead and Davenport matched a Storm field goal at 3:53 for a 53-50 score.

Providence again edged to within one on at 53-52 with two free throws at 1:28 but De Vries put the game out of reach by scoring the final six points of the game on two free throws at 1:20 and two field goals at the one minute and the forty seconds marks as the Indians closed out the 59-52 victory.

Scoring leaders for the game for the Indians were Davenport with 26 points, De Vries with 16, Barrett with 7, and Moss with 6 while Moss and Davenport tied for the lead in assists with 3 each and sophomore Cole Ledford followed with 2.

Lakeview Academy 60, Indians 56 – Most of the first quarter against Lakeview Academy proved to be quite a defensive battle with the visiting Lions able to pull out to a 7-0 lead by the five minutes mark which they held until a trey by Major Moss got the Indians on the scoreboard at the 2:02 mark.

A steal and coast to coast run by Zach Davenport at 1:24 then got the Indians within 7-5 but a deuce, a trey, and two free throws by the Lions more than matched a pair of free throws by Will De Vries as the Lions led 14-7 after one quarter.

A trey by junior Colton Shook got the Indians within 14-10



less than a minute into the second quarter but a pair of treys had the Lions ahead 20-10 by the five and a half minutes mark.

The pattern of Indian challenges throughout the game would continue, however, as a field goal by Adam Barrett and two by Major Moss had them within 20-16 at 3:38 and a steal by Cole Ledford and fast break assist to Shook had them still within 24-18 at 1:27.

The Lions appeared to take complete control, however, when they scored the final six points of the second quarter for a 30-18 lead at intermission and opened the third with an 11-5 run for a 41-23 lead by the three minutes mark.

A miracle run by the Indians was about to begin, however, as De Vries struck for three straight field goals between the 2:48 and 1:48 marks and Davenport added a steal and run for the basket for just a 41-31 Indian deficit at 1:33.

The Lions appeared to break the Indians' momentum by sinking two free throws for a 43-31 lead by third quarter's end and they were back to a 45-32 lead by the 6:49 mark of the fourth.

But the best was still to come for the Indians as treys by De Vries and Shook got them within 47-38 at 5:38 and they responded to a Lakeview deuce with a trey by Davenport, deuces by De Vries and Davenport, and two free throws by De Vries between the 5:17 and 3:44 marks for a stunning 47-47 standoff.

The Lions would reclaim the lead 49-47 on a field goal at 3:31 but a field goal by senior Jake Pyrluk at 3:15 got the Indians a 49-49 tie and a De Vries drive for two points had them ahead 51-49 at 2:43. The Lions sank two free throws for a 52-51 lead at 2:05 but the Indians still weren't through as Davenport made a three point play at 1:59 for a 54-52 Towns lead.

A Lakeview trey got them back ahead 55-54 at 1:40 but the Indians would not be able to dent

the scoreboard on their next three possessions. The Lions sank five of six free throw attempts between the 45.6 and 9.8 seconds marks for a 60-54 lead which was reduced to a final margin of 60-56 when Moss took the ball coast to coast for a lay up with four seconds left.

Scoring leaders for the Indians for the game were De Vries with 19 points, Davenport with 15, Moss with 10, and Shook with 8 while leaders in assists were Moss with 4 and Davenport and Ledford with 2 each.

Indians 63, George Walton Academy 60 – The Indians appeared to be taking charge of the game against George Walton Academy on Friday when thirteen points by Zach Davenport, including the first eleven for his team, led them out to a 17-7 advantage by the 1:25 mark of the first quarter with the lead being 17-10 by quarter's end.

The Bulldogs opened the second quarter with a 9-2 run for a 19-19 tie by the 5:51 mark but the Indians regained the lead on a field goal by Adam Barrett just twenty seconds later and led by as much as 36-26 before the Bulldogs sank a trey at the buzzer for a 36-30 Towns lead at intermission.

Will De Vries had the hot hand in the second quarter with nine points with Davenport close behind with six and Barrett following with four.

The Indians got the third quarter off on a rousing note when Major Moss soared above the rim to tip in a long lob pass by De Vries just eight seconds following Homecoming festivities and they got their second double digits lead of 41-31 on a trey by De Vries at the 6:38 mark.

The Indians led by between four and nine points after that until a deuce and trey at the forty three and twenty seven seconds marks got the Bulldogs within 48-47.

A field goal by Barrett at the buzzer gave the Indians an ounce or two of breathing room entering the

fourth quarter but their leads ranged from just one point to five until the Bulldogs tied the score 57-57 on a field goal 3:02 and took a 59-57 lead on a basket at 2:35.

De Vries quickly tied the score with two free throws at 2:28, giving him eight of the nine points scored by the Indians to that point in the fourth quarter.

The Bulldogs went into a stall for awhile after that, eventually missing a 3-point attempt under increasing defensive pressure by the Indians near the forty seconds mark with the Indians missing a one and one free throw attempt at 35.6 seconds with the Bulldogs getting the rebound.

This set the stage for Moss, who had missed significant playing time due to foul problems, to make almost certainly the defensive play of the season and even multiple seasons for that matter near the twenty seconds mark.

With the Bulldogs looking to go for the final shot, Moss tipped a Bulldog pass high in the air near the George Walton bench and then leaped high himself, not only preventing the ball from going out of bounds but in one motion making a long tip pass to Barrett near mid court. Barrett, a 6'4" post player, handled the ball like a guard in taking it half the length of the court for a layup in heavy traffic, giving the Indians a 61-59 lead with eighteen seconds on the clock.

But the drama was far from over as the Bulldogs missed a shot for the tie around the six seconds mark but drew a foul on a putback attempt and sank just the second of two free throws at 4.5 seconds for a 61-60 Towns lead.

The Indians then threw the ball nearly the length of the court to Moss who was hammered for a foul when receiving the pass and made the first of two free throw attempts at 3.5 seconds for a 62-60 Towns lead.

Barrett claimed the rebound when the second attempt was missed and sank the second of two free throw tosses at 1.8 seconds for a 63-60 score and a desperation Bulldog shot from past mid court sailed over the backboard as time expired with the Indians holding on for the heart stopping victory.

De Vries took scoring honors for the game with 26 points and was followed by Davenport with 22, Barrett with 10, and Moss with 5 while six different Indians contributed at least one assist with Moss and Colton Shook leading with 3 each and Davenport following with 2.

It is noteworthy that De Vries went 11 for 11 at the foul line in this game. It is not at all a frequent occurrence in high school for a player to reach double digits in free throws made in a game without a miss but this is the second time for an Indian to accomplish this feat this year as Davenport went 12 for 12 against Murray County in December.

Lady Indians fall short of victory in three Region 8-A home games

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Basketball Team got back in action last week after weather related delays held them to just two games in the prior eighteen days and no games in the past nine days with three home games on Thursday through Saturday and three to follow this week.

After facing Hebron Christian of Dacula at home on Tuesday of this week, they travel to Commerce for a makeup game on Thursday and close out their regular season on Friday against Tallulah Falls on Senior Night in the Towns County Gym.

The Region 8A Tournament will be held next week at Athens Academy, which is actually located in the edge of Oconee County just south of Athens.

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The Lady Indians faced the second place teams from both the North and South sub-regions of Region 8-A in Lakeview Academy and George Walton Academy along with Providence Christian Academy, a team tied for seventh place in the region with the Lady Indians and Athens Academy by week's end.

The Lady Indians led by as many as fifteen points in first half action only to see the Providence Christian Lady Storm rally from behind for a 71-63 victory on Tuesday, were overwhelmed by Lakeview Academy 89-53 on Friday, and then saw hot scoring runs at the beginning and end of the game account for more than



Lady Indians photos by Lowell Nicholson

the margin of victory in a 52-32 loss to George Walton.

Providence Christian Academy 71, Lady Indians 63 – Six different Lady Indians put points on the scoreboard in the first quarter against Providence Christian as they took a 9-7 lead on a field goal by senior Savannah Dyer at 4:43 that would hold until the 3:19 mark of the third frame. Senior Jocelyn Byers contributed 6 points and Dyer four in that opening quarter when the Lady Indians led by as much as 17-12 but then 17-14 by quarter's end.

The Lady Indians appeared to be breaking the game open when they began the second quarter with a 12-0 run, compliments of three deuces by Dyer and treys by junior Kristen Henson and freshman Kristen Byers for a 29-14 lead, but the Lady Storm battled back to as close as 36-28 before settling for a 38-28 Towns lead at intermission.

Dyer totaled ten points and Kristen Byers five for the Lady Indians in second quarter action.

A drive for two points by Jocelyn Byers just sixteen seconds into the third quarter had

the Lady Indians ahead 40-28 but Providence used three treys on a 16-2 run after that, ending on a three point play for a 44-42 lead at the aforementioned 3:19 mark.

There were three ties and two lead changes the rest of the quarter with sophomore Madison McClure twice getting the Lady Indians ahead, by a 47-46 score on a three point play at 1:27 and 49-47 on a drive for two points at forty five seconds. But the Lady Storm struck for six straight points the final thirty three seconds for a 53-49 lead entering the fourth quarter.

The Lady Indians struck for five straight points of their own on two free throws each by Jocelyn Byers and McClure and a one for two trip to the foul line by junior Madison Landress for a 54-53 lead just thirty three seconds into the fourth quarter.

A coast to coast run for two points and a free throw by Jocelyn Byers by the 4:25 mark again had the Lady Indians ahead 57-55 but a deuce and trey by Providence by the three minute mark had the Lady Storm leading 60-57.

A putback basket by Dyer



at 2:09 got the Lady Indians within 60-59 but the Lady Storm used nine for twelve free throw shooting and a single field goal the final 1:51 of the game to pull away for a 71-63 victory.

Jocelyn Byers and Dyer scored seven and four points respectively for the Lady Indians in fourth quarter action.

Jocelyn Byers and Dyer also tied for scoring honors for the game with 18 points each with other scoring leaders being McClure with 9 points, Kristen Byers with 6, and Landress with 5. Jocelyn Byers led in assists with 6 and was followed by McClure with 3 and Henson with 2 according to your reporter's tally.

Lakeview Academy 89, Lady Indians 53 – The Lady Indians reduced an early 7-1 deficit against Lakeview Academy to 7-6 on a trey by Jocelyn Byers and a long deuce by Madison McClure by the 4:38 mark of the first quarter and a second trey by Byers at 2:22 had them within 15-9.

But the Lady Lions built a 23-12 lead by quarter's end, largely on the strength of five treys in the quarter and they added

two more treys less than a minute and a half into the second period for a 29-14 lead which became 48-26 by halftime.

Kristen Henson and Madison Landress contributed four points each in second quarter action and Byers included her fourth trey of the game among nine points and McClure a trey among five in the third quarter when the Lady Lions built a 71-46 lead on the way to the 89-53 victory.

Jocelyn Byers led the Lady Indians in scoring for the game with 24 points while Landress and McClure followed with 7 each. McClure led in assists with 4 and was followed by Kristen Byers with 2. Junior Ryann Moody scored 21 points as one of five Lady Lions hitting double figures in combining for seventy nine of their total points.

The Lady Lions completed the week's play with an overall record of 17-6 after losing four of their first six games.

They have a 10-1 Region 8-A record with a home game scheduled for Tuesday of this week against the first place Commerce Lady Tigers who have a

10-0 region record entering the Lakeview game.

George Walton Academy 52, Lady Indians 32 – A long deuce by Kristen Henson got the Lady Indians a 2-0 lead just fifteen seconds into the first quarter against George Walton and a putback basket by Jocelyn Byers and a second long deuce by Henson reduced an 8-2 Lady Bulldog lead to 8-6 at the 4:33 mark but the Lady Dogs broke out to a 19-6 lead by quarter's end.

The two teams played on virtually even terms in the second quarter with Madison McClure contributing the Lady Indians' first seven points as George Walton held a 29-15 lead at halftime.

The Lady Dogs extended their lead a bit to 39-21 through three quarters but the Lady Indians made a brief challenge at the start of the fourth, using a 7-0 run on a field goal by Savannah Dyer, a trey by Byers, and a deuce by junior Madison Stroud for just a 39-28 deficit with 5:36 still on the clock.

The Lady Bulldogs would finish the game much as they started it, however, in using a 13-4 run for a 52-32 victory with Byers contributing the four Lady Indian points on a drive and putback basket.

When all was said and done, the Lady Indians had played the Lady Bulldogs on pretty much even terms during the middle two quarters and into the fourth but the 19-6 first quarter and late 13-4 run accounted for a twenty two points advantage in the twenty points win.

Scoring leaders for the Lady Indians were Byers with 9 points, McClure with 7, and Savannah Dyer with 6 while Byers also led in assists with 4 and was followed by Stroud with 2.

Senior Zalandria Hill scored 17 points in leading the win for the Lady Bulldogs who improved to a 10-10 overall record and 7-4 in the region.