

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Middle School Lady Indians celebrate winning season

By Shawn Jarrard
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Baseball Head Coach Shannon Floyd has been busy getting his Indians ready for the start of the season.

And though the first game of the year against Union County was canceled due to inclement weather, the season promises to be an exciting one.

Coach Floyd recently completed a successful season coaching the Towns County Middle School Girls Basketball Team, where the Lady Indians finished the season with an 11-5 record.

"In the five losses, one was by 1 point, two games by 3 points and the final game was by 5 points," said Coach Floyd. "The 2014-15 season proved to be a very successful and fun year. I want to give my assistant coach, Sheena Kendall, our managers, Alexa Hoffman, Jacob Kinsey, the community, school, parents and players all a big thank you."

The 2014-15 Towns County Middle School Lady Indians team was: eighth-graders, Maddie Thomas, Erika Spano, Kenzee Denton, Lexi Ledford, Kristen Byers and Lea Neumyer; seventh-graders, Alexia Crisp, Journey Hunter, Kaitlyn Davis, Sophia Shook and Shelby Turner; sixth-graders, Kennedy Henson, Alexis Bradley and Vanessa Floyd.

"Each and every player contributed to our winning season," said Coach Floyd. "They worked hard during practice and played with heart on the court."

Looking back, the girls basketball team kicked it into high gear in the New Year.

"The Lady Indians compiled three wins to kick January off with a bang," said Coach Floyd. "The Lady Indians had to cancel a game before Christmas break because of sickness. The team was hit by numerous ailments and did not have enough healthy bodies to play. The girls had a two week break and got back to action the first week of the New Year."

Jan. 6 saw the Lady Indians achieve a double-overtime victory against Hiwassee Dam, NC.

"This game was a hard fought battle the entire game," said Coach Floyd. "Neumyer had the game high in points



The Middle School Lady Indians knock off Athens Christian last month with 11. Both teams appeared rusty from the break. The Lady Indians came back in the fourth quarter to tie the game at 22 and sent it to overtime. Byers made huge defensive plays to stifle the Lady Eagles from scoring throughout the game. Her defensive leadership was essential to getting the game to overtime.

Both teams exchanged a couple of baskets in the first overtime, leaving the game tied at 25.

"In the second overtime, Henson and Floyd picked up big rebounds to limit the Lady Eagles to one shot in each possession," said Coach Floyd. "Neumyer hit the biggest shot of the game with a 3-pointer, which put the Lady Indians up for good. Floyd ended the scoring for the Lady Indians with a free throw to preserve a tough 4-point victory. The final score was 29-25."

The very next game pitted the Lady Indians against Rabun Gap on Jan. 8 at home.

"After a slow start, the Lady Indians went on a barrage of points lead by two sixth-graders, Henson and Floyd, and a seventh-grader, Turner, each totaling 8 points apiece," said Coach Floyd. "Towns County's defense was the catalyst to another win. Denton and Shook were responsible for Rabun Gap's turnovers, which turned into Lady Indian baskets. The final score was Towns 41 and Rabun Gap 12."

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Rounding out that week was the Lady Indians' best game of the year, against Clarke Middle at home.

"The Lady Owls were big, fast, very athletic and looking to ambush the Lady Indians," said Coach Floyd. "The Lady Indians, however, were up to the challenge that Saturday morning. The Lady Owls had a long ride to the mountains, and the Lady Indians wanted to make their ride home a little longer."

After a rapid exchange of baskets, Towns County was up 10-6 after the first quarter. The Lady Indians dominated the second quarter, outscoring the Lady Owls 16-7, effectively expanding their halftime lead to 26-13.

"Thomas and Henson were leading the charge for the Lady Indians with multiple buckets," said Coach Floyd. "Shook, Spano and Byers set the tone with smothering defense that the Lady Owls could not handle. Denton, Turner, Floyd and Thomas controlled the boards over the much larger team from Athens."

The third quarter started just like the second quarter ended, according to Coach Floyd, with big baskets for the Lady Indians while limiting the Lady Owls to few opportunities.

"Ledford contributed with 4 points and excellent effort on the defensive end," said Coach Floyd. "Shook and Henson each hit 3-point baskets, and



the Lady Indians steamrolled the Owls 48-15. The coach of Clarke Middle was impressed with the Lady Indians, and he commented on the constant pressure the Lady Indians put on the Lady Owls.

Coach Floyd was very proud of his girls for their effort all that week, as each game had different girls stepping up to lead the team to victory.

"I love watching these girls compete," said Coach Floyd. "They love the game, they play hard, and they want each other to succeed. Just watch the bench when something happens on the court - the enthusiasm is contagious and they cheer each other on."

The TCMS girls basketball season came to a close on Jan. 24, the end of a week that held two exciting games in which the Lady Indians came up just short.

Towns County traveled to Athens that week to play the Lady Spartans of Athens Academy on Jan. 20.

"The Lady Indians came out a little sluggish in the first half, falling behind 16 points early in the second quarter," said Coach Floyd. "The Lady Indians gained their composure and defensive intensity to cut it to a 3-point deficit at halftime."

But the second half proved to be what Coach Floyd called "a grinding defensive battle" between the Lady Indians and Lady Spartans, and the

quarter." The Lady Indians had buckets by Ledford, Davis, Neumyer and Byers to even the score at halftime at 21.

"They played some of their best basketball of the season in this game," said Coach Floyd. "Byers, Denton, Shook and Floyd helped hold the Lady Lions to limited points in the second quarter. Floyd, Denton, Thomas and Turner had a tough order matching up with the bigger Lakeview squad, but held their own valiantly."

After the halftime, the Lady Indians went on a "war path," according to Coach Floyd, where they scored the first 6 points of the second half. This drive was led by Thomas and Neumyer.

"Unfortunately, the Lady Lions would respond with 10 consecutive points, most of which came from the foul line, to close the third quarter and lead the Lady Indians by 4 points," said Coach Floyd. "The stage was set for the tribe to make a comeback. The Lady Indians would tie the game at 33. After many free throws for the Lady Lions, the tribe was behind again."

At this point, Kennedy Henson hit a 3-point shot and another basket to square the game up once more.

"Byers would keep the tribe even with Lakeview by making a couple of baskets of her own," said Coach Floyd. "The game stood at a tie again with 1:51 left to play. The big post player came up big for Lakeview in the closing minutes, and the Lady Indians fell short by 5 points, 42-47."

Coach Floyd was openly proud of his team's effort and the fight they put up against a very talented team from Lakeview.

"It was unfortunate to fight so hard and come up a little short," said Coach Floyd.

Lakeview shot 34 free throws to the Lady Indians' 18 attempts.

"I have never been one to blame officiating, but there seemed to be a large discrepancy in fouls called and not called," said Coach Floyd. "We still had a shot in the last two minutes and we came up short. My girls played an exceptional game along with Lakeview. It was a shame someone had to lose."

Towns County 12&U basketball team advances to Semi Finals of District

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The Towns County Recreation and Conference Center hosted the Midget 12 and Under Boys District 7 Class C Basketball Tournament on Friday, Feb. 20, and Monday, Feb. 23.

In the first round, the Towns County Indians cemented a spot in the semi-finals against White County by defeating Union County 49-36.

The All-Star Indians are made up of Aiden Berrong, Liam King, Luis Quijada, Cody Young, Peyton Barrett, Adrian Hooper, Kyle Oakes, Mason Thomas, Ricky Kronkonko and Collin Crowder.

Berrong lit up the scoreboard with 8 points, Barrett had 6 points, Oakes scored 7 points, while Thomas and Crowder came away with 14 points apiece.

As a team, the boys looked strong and confident, and never once lost the lead throughout the game.

"For most of the game we controlled the boards, and we played good defense," said Indians Head Coach John Keister. "We were pretty on our shot selection."

"I thought we played very well. A couple of times we got wild, threw the ball up, but for the most part, we were pretty well disciplined, which I insist on. I got some good kids."

The tournament was originally scheduled to conclude on Saturday, Feb. 21, but the semifinals were rescheduled for Monday, Feb. 23, due to bad weather.

More bad weather



The 12&U Indians add two more points off a layup during their win over Union County (left). The Indians pose for a group shot following the win. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

expected Monday night caused the cancellation of the district championship game, to be rescheduled at a later date.

Because the semifinal matchups were played following press time Monday, results will be available in next week's edition of the newspaper.

Class C of District 7 features eight teams: Towns County, Rabun County, Lumpkin County, Union County, Commerce, Banks County, White County and Oglethorpe County.

Assistant Director of the Towns County Rec Department Alan Rogers was the tournament director, and Rec Director Wes Hooper manned concessions.

here, with families and friends coming all at the same time," said Hooper. "So, we're pretty jammed up that Friday evening here."

The Towns County Fire Department was on hand to assist visitors in the parking areas, and volunteers, many of them parents, helped to run the event.

"These teams that are coming in are supposed to be composed of the better players in each county," said Hooper. "A lot of times they're referred to as All-Stars. Sometimes the better players don't make it, sometimes they do. But these are the players that are considered the best players in each county that come and participate in this tournament."

"We're going to have eight different teams in



Towns County has two boys teams that compete during the regular season in the 12 and under age group, which features boys aged 11 and 12.

"We just don't have the numbers that a lot of the counties have around us that are competing," said Hooper. "Union County will probably have four teams, Rabun has four teams - they have more kids to choose their All-Stars from."

Despite the wintry mixed experienced Friday night, the turnout ensured that the boys received a good show of support.

"Also here, in this particular age group, a lot of our 12-year-olds play middle school ball, so we miss them down here when it comes to tournament

time," said Hooper. "We have a lot of 11-year-olds that are involved in our All-Star group, and most of the groups we're playing are going to be about all 12-year-olds. So, it's a little bit of a disadvantage, but we compete and have a good time and enjoy the experience."

Towns County's team has been practicing six days a week for the past couple of weeks in preparation for the tournament, and they were certainly ready come Friday night.

"This Towns County 12 and under team looks good this year," said Hooper. "They're still young, but they've got a lot of talent - more talent than I believe that they've had in a few years as far as num-

bers go. "So, I think they'll be able to compete better this year. We've got a great volunteer coach that's coaching them. Coach Keister, he's coached with us for quite a few years."

And thanks to the new facilities available at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center, which recently turned a year old, Towns County is able to play host to events like this one.

"This building is a multipurpose building," said Hooper. "We're able to offer different things. And with two gyms now and the parking space that we didn't have before, it gives us an opportunity to do so much more than we were able to do at the old facility."