

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Lady Indian soccer caps off perfect week with wins over Highlands, Rabun

By Joe Collins
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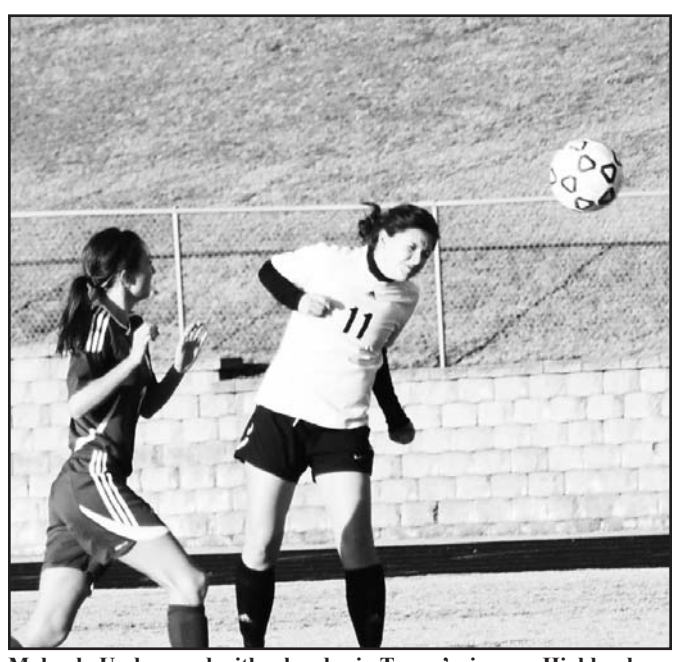
The Towns County Lady Indians soccer team finished the week with two big wins and increased their record for the season to 4-2-0.

Their first win on the week came as they hosted the Lady Wildcats from Rabun at the Frank McClure Memorial stadium and won a close one in overtime 2-1.

They returned to TCHS and Frank McClure Memorial stadium on Thursday and played one of their best games of the year against Highlands winning 5-1 that saw junior Faithe Robinson score her first hat trick of the season scoring 3 of the teams total 5 goals.

The Lady Indians took to the field on Monday and faced a lady Wildcat team on the prowl for vengeance after loosing to the Lady Indians at home the week before. Rabun caught the Indians on their heels early and controlled the ball for the first few minutes and actually had two shots at goal which were stopped by sophomore keeper Taylor McCarter before the tribe woke up and found their stride.

The offense got jump started as junior Vanessa Eller came close on a penalty kick at the 31:36 mark and junior Taylor Vardeman received a pass from junior Elizabeth Turner and made a shot from 30-yards that ranged a little high and missed at the 29:14 mark. The third attempt at goal did not miss as Vardeman sent a corner kick in front of the Indians goal and junior Makayla Underwood crashed a hard header into the goal for the tribe's first score of the game at the 26:16 mark



Makayla Underwood with a header in Towns' win over Highlands County. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

putting the Indians up 1-0. Two more hard shots from Robinson and Eller missed and the first period ended with the lady Indians leading 1-0.

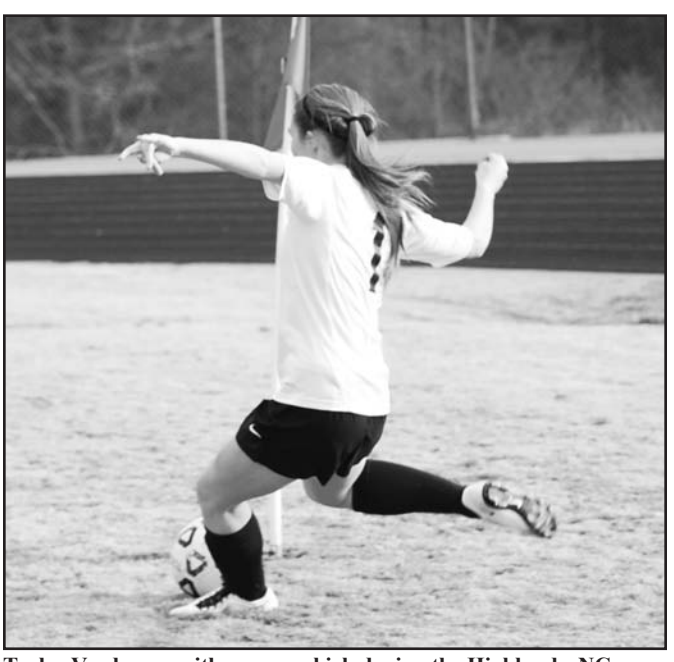
The second half started well for the Indians with a solid shot attempt from junior Kaila Reece that just skimmed over the crossbar for a miss. McCarter had a great save at the 55:47 mark with Robinson missing another hard shot just shortly afterward. A sneaky pass by Vardeman to Makayla Underwood served up a good opportunity but just missed at the 69:48 mark. McCarter was called on again for another good save but found a hard shot by the Wildcats just out of her reach and the score was tied 1-1 as the game ended.

The first 5-minute overtime period saw the Indians come to life early and pass the ball very well. The defense didn't allow the ball into the backfield one time during the

first OT period, which gave the offense a lot of time to set up and score.

The only score in OT was by the Indians as Robinson passed from the right side to mid-field for the assist to Makayla Underwood. She sidestepped a defender and sent a hard shot into the goal at the 1:43 mark of the first OT period to give the Indians the lead 2-1. Neither team found the goal in the second period of OT and the tribe defeated the Wildcats 2-1.

"Our offense was just okay tonight as we missed several chances including a penalty kick and we really need to hit those. Our defense is doing better and we are only allowing one goal from each team we play and that is better that last year. Makayla and Faithe had a strong game but we are still missing to many chances inside and we need to take advantage of those opportunities," stated Head Coach Peter Byrne while soaking up the third victory of



Taylor Vardeman with a corner kick during the Highlands, NC game. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

the young season.

The Indians second win came on Thursday as they played host to Highlands at the Frank McClure Memorial stadium and although they were the host they were not hospitable beating their guest 5-1 on the back of some solid defense and a hat trick by Robinson who scored her final goal at the 75:34 mark.

Highlands drew first blood at the 36:31 mark TCHS keeper McCarter let the ball enter the net just inside the right corner for the score.

"I got confused as to where the ball was. I heard someone holler that they had it and I lost eye contact for just a second and when I saw it again it was in the goal. It was just some confusion that's all. It happens but I hate it happened to the team," said a humble McCarter when asked if she lost the ball because the sun was in her eyes.

In reality it might have

been the best thing to happen because the wake up call that followed had the Indians offense working hard. At the 32:32 mark, Robinson sent a hard shot toward goal on the left hand side that was stopped only by a great play from the Highland keeper and another at the 28:43 that again was stopped at the goal. Vardeman hit the first goal of the game for the Indians from the 35-yard line that cleared the keeper's head and scored off an assist by Makayla Underwood. Vardeman then returned the favor at the 6:35 mark and fed Makayla Underwood for the assist as she hit a shot from the left hand side from the 30-yard line giving the Indians the lead 2-1 which is how the first half ended.

The Indians took to the warpath and dominated Highlands with their defense in the second half. Robinson took the ball from Eller at the 45-yard line and with some fancy foot work and a last second

fake found the goal giving the Indians a 3-1 lead at the 43:25 mark in the second period. McCarter made a solid stop on Highlands only goal attempt at the 50:37 mark. Reece hit a hard shot at the 55:36 mark but was deflected by the Highlands keeper. Robinson then took a pass from Reece at the 35-yard line and hit a hard left footed kick that screamed into the goal to give the Indians a 4-1 lead and Reece the assist. Freshman Ally Settles made an awesome defensive play to save a goal at the 63:37 mark and then Robinson took a pass from Makayla Underwood and hit her third goal of the game giving the Indians the lead and an assist to Underwood at the 75:34 mark to increase the Indians lead 5-1 which is where the game ended.

"I was very impressed with the tenacity of our defense tonight especially with Settles, Makayla Underwood and Taylor Underwood. Vardeman and Turner did a fantastic job of battling for and winning the ball. As a team, we are passing well and defending well in the middle third of the field but we still need to work on our possession in the final third. Offensively our midfield is not committing to the attack and our final ball or killer ball is lacking at times. Overall our effort on the field is fantastic and I am very happy with our progress," said Byrne.

The Lady Indians are playing well and are exciting to watch on offense as well as defense. If you haven't had the chance to see a game then make plans now to come out and support the team. You will see some good high school girl's soccer.

Their next game is March 16 away at Highlands. Game time is at 1 p.m.

Towns County basketball 2013: continuing a legacy; building for tomorrow

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

With the 2013 season now complete for the Towns County Lady Indians and Indians, their opponents, and the participants in the Battle of the States Tournament, we will look at several miscellaneous items and a look at what TCHS opponents and Battle of the State opponents did, mostly in post season, in completing coverage for this season.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING – After addressing the outstanding free throw shooting of the Lady Indians in their two games against Gordon Lee in last week's Herald, your reporter decided to look at how the Lady Indians fared during the entire season at the foul line and the final totals are astounding. They sank 434 free throws in 636 attempts for 68.2 percent accuracy for the entire team for the entire season.

Individually, the three Lady Indians receiving and sinking the most attempts came oh so close to identical accuracy. Eryn Cochran was 123 for 162 at the line for 75.9%, Stephanie Patton 117 for 156 for 75 percent and Kellsie Cowart 75 for 101 for 74.3 percent.

Such records are not always compiled nor readily available for comparison but these stats were kept and remain available for seven years in the 1970's for both the Lady Indians and Indians with years of great success included for both teams during those years. These stats reveal that the Lady Indians never exceeded 54.3 percent at the foul line for a full season during those years when they reached that total during the sub-region championship season of 1975. The Indians' highest rate during the seven years was 60.6 percent in that same 1975 season when they captured their only region championship to date.

Two Lady Indians combined this year to establish a new, combined team scoring record for one season. Sophomore Stephanie Patton became only the second Lady Indian known to score as many as 600 points in a single season and combined her 605 points with junior Eryn Cochran's 409 for a total of 1,014 during the course of the thirty one games played during the 2013 season. They together eclipsed the 1,009 total when junior Nikki Winn scored 612 and senior Amanda Irwin 397 in thirty two games during the Lady Indians' most recent prior trip to the state final four in 2008. Bruce Wilson is the only Indian known to have reached 600 points in twenty nine games during the 1962 season.

And Lady Indians Head Coach Jim Melton extended his career record for varsity coaching



Towns County's Lady Indian basketball team and Coach Melton provided a memorable 2012-13 season.

wins at TCHS by completing his fifteenth season at the helm with an overall 303-130 record, after passing the prior career school record of 272 wins by Dion Eller with the Lady Indians last year. The average of 20.2 wins per season is quite remarkable when considering that Towns County High School is one of the smaller public schools in the state with many of the wins coming at the expense of much larger schools.

ALL REGION SELECTIONS – The Lady Indians and Indians were both honored by having selections for the All Region 8A Teams. Junior Eryn Cochran and sophomore Stephanie Patton were selected for the first time in the girls division and sophomore Dallas Manus for honorable mention in the boys division. It was the second successive year for all three to be honored by selection to the respective teams.

All three selected players provided outstanding all around play in such categories as scoring, assists, rebounding, and defensively for their teams with scoring averages and free throw percentages being the only currently available statistics for the full season. Patton averaged 19.5 points per game, Cochran 13.2, and Manus 10.4 for their teams. Manus also proved, like Cochran and Patton as referenced above, to have an excellent touch at the foul line, sinking 54 of 75 attempts for 72 percent accuracy.

COCHRAN SELECTED FOR GACA ALL STAR GAME – Eryn Cochran has received an exceptional additional honor in addition to all region status by being selected for the junior class Georgia Athletic Coaches Association (GACA) Basketball All Star Game to be held at Armstrong Atlantic University in Savannah on March 23. She will join Lady Indians Head Coach Jim Melton who was announced last month as head coach of the North Junior Team which will square off with a team from south Georgia. Participation by Cochran and Melton follows by two years the selection of Lady Indian senior Jordan Moss

for the first appearance by either a Lady Indian or Indian in one of these games.

The GACA was established in 1938 for the advancement of athletics in Georgia and is dedicated to high school coaches in the State of Georgia. The all star games serve as a showcase for top girls and boys players from all around the state with a total of four games to be played, including a Junior Showcase game and a Senior Showcase game for both the girls and boys.

TIME TO SAY GOOD-BYE – Perhaps the most difficult moment for any athlete at the high school or other level of play is the realization that their career has come to an end. The Lady Indians' State Final Four Game against Gordon Lee marked the end of the high school basketball careers for senior post players Dadrion Blythe and Emily Anderson.

Both Blythe and Anderson worked their way up through the system of playing basketball at Towns County Recreation Department and for the Lady Indian JV's and Varsity. Blythe did double duty with the JV's and Varsity as a freshman before assuming full time varsity duty as a sophomore while Anderson played for the JV's as a freshman and sophomore and then took on full time duty with the varsity as a junior and senior. The Lady Indians reached great heights during the four years Blythe and Anderson were members of the team, compiling an overall 99-21 record with three region championships and four trips to the state tournament included.

Blythe will be remembered as a capable scorer with a soft shooting touch but perhaps more significantly for her strong rebounding and defensive capabilities. She had a knack for rising to the occasion in scoring in double digits among vital contributions in games against such physically taller and stronger opponents as George Walton Academy and Gordon Lee.

While Anderson may be

remembered to a greater extent for her power hitting on the Lady Indians fast pitch softball team, she proved to be a vital member of the Lady Indians' basketball team as a junior and especially during this her senior year, providing strong rebounding and often timely scoring. She was never better than in the region championship win over George Walton Academy and the state tournament win over Calhoun County when she provided 10 and 8 points along with 5 rebounds in each game.

And the George Walton game in the region tournament marked the end of the high school basketball careers for two Indian seniors, Ryan Tallent and Joseph Gibson. While their athletic talents and careers show widely contrasting trails, they share traits of extremely hard work and dedicated service to their team, school, and community.

Tallent is a smooth left-hander known for a soft shooting touch from long range and the foul line along with the ability to take the ball to the basket for driving layups and being a reliable rebounder during four years of service to his team. Ryan is a long time Indian who worked his way through the system in elevating himself to varsity play as early as his freshman year.

Gibson, on the other hand, is a lightning quick and fast athlete known primarily for an outstanding career as a football quarterback, for two years at Class AAAA Hardaway High School in Columbus, Georgia, and as a senior for TCHS, with no experience in basketball since his middle school days. He was encouraged by his coaches and teammates to pursue basketball this year, however, and used his speed and quickness in rapidly improving his skills as a ball handler and defender as both a starter and off the bench. Joseph gave the appearance to your reporter that his lack of experience at the JV and varsity levels were the only hindrances to his having been a top notch all around varsity basketball player.

At this writing, it appears that both Tallent and Gibson have a good chance at a future in sports at the collegiate level. Tallent plans to pursue a college career in basketball as a walk on candidate at Piedmont College in Demorest and Gibson is exploring his options for a career in college football at this writing.

Many thanks are extended to Dadrion, Emily, Ryan, and Joseph for their hours of dedicated and highly regarded service to their school and teams and best wishes are extended to them for the future.

POST SEASON BASKETBALL PLAY ELSEWHERE

It's always interesting to take a look back following completion of the season at how the opponents of the Lady Indians and Indians and participants in the Battle of the States Tournament fare in post season play with a mixture of heroic, disappointing, and sometimes unexpected finishes always present. Of special note this year is the appearance in the state final four of three of the top four girls finishers in this year's Battle of the States. Following is coverage of some of the post season activity for several teams or groups of teams of interest to Lady Indian and Indian fans:

GORDON LEE – Of course, most Lady Indian fans are well aware of their making the Class A State Public Final Four against fellow Battle of the States foe Gordon Lee with the seeding making it impossible for both teams to make the championship game. As most Towns County fans also know, the Lady Trojans pulled away from a two point lead in the last quarter for a 57-49 win over the Lady Indians.

The Lady Trojans entered the championship game with a 24-7 record and went on to take their first state championship with a 61-56 victory over Randolph-Clay from southwest Georgia. The Lady Trojans took early control of the game and led 17-8, 36-19, and 50-31 at the quarter breaks before the Lady Red Devils rallied to within the final five points margin near the end of the game.

Some observers had predicted that Gordon Lee would be no match for the top seeded Lady Devils who entered the game with a 29-2 record with the two losses being by a 60-53 score to Region IAAAA champion Monroe of Albany and by just a 52-49 score to Greater Atlanta Christian, ranked third in Class AA in the final poll prior to post season play. Many observers considered, prior to state tournament play, Region 1A to be the top public girls region in the classification with four teams making the state tournament. But Gordon Lee and the Lady Indians

combined to eliminate Randolph-Clay, Seminole County, and Calhoun County with Randolph-Clay themselves eliminating Mitchell County in the second round.

REGION 8A – Three girls teams and one boys team from Region 8A qualified for the Class A Private State Tournament. The regular season champion and tournament runner up George Walton Academy Girls defeated Brookstone of Columbus 49-33 in the first round before falling to eventual state runner up Southwest Atlanta Christian 57-29 in the second round.

Darlington of Rome defeated Providence Christian 62-27 in the first round before falling themselves in the second round 61-40 to eventual state champion St. Francis. And Hebron Christian fell 64-40 in first round play to Holy Innocents of Atlanta who lost in the state final four 78-43 to Southwest Atlanta Christian.

The Athens Christian Boys, who finished first in Region 8A in regular season and in the region tournament made it all the way to the State Final Four. They got there by defeating Mt. Pisgah 83-70 and North Cobb Christian 78-76 but fell 60-55 to Greenforest Christian, the eventual state champions in Class A Private by means of a 55-41 win over St. Francis in the championship game.

REGION 8-AA – Of course, the Lady Indians and Indians were quite familiar with the Union County and Rabun County teams in Region 8AA. The Lady Indians had success against the Lady Panthers with a 2-1 record and went 1-1 against the Lady Wildcats who, themselves, proved to be the top teams in their region. Union County earned an automatic bid to the state tournament by taking the regular season championship but fell in overtime by a 61-52 score to Rabun in the semi-finals of the region tournament. Rabun went on to destroy host Greene County 76-51 for the Region Championship while Union raced past Jefferson 58-32 for third place in the region.

In Class AA State Tournament play, the Rabun Girls defeated Manchester 64-34 in first round action but fell by a 55-37 score to defending state champion Lovett in the second round. The Union County Girls had to travel to Bremen for first round action and fell by a 69-42 score to the Lady Blue Devils who split two regular season games with Gordon Lee but fell by a 75-27 score in the next round to eventual state champion Wesleyan.

In boys play, the Union County Boys took Washington-Wilkes to three overtimes in their region tournament opener before

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