

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Indians baseball still has outside shot at State Tournament

By Charles Duncan
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The Towns County Indians hosted two region rivals on Friday and Saturday.

Unfortunately, George Walton bested the Indians 11-7 on Friday, and Pinecrest Academy defeated Towns County 11-4 on Saturday.

However, Indians' Head Baseball Coach Chris Vardo said the scoreboard doesn't reflect the never-say-die attitude of his Indians.

"We had a few mental lapses," Vardo said in reference to his team's 11-4 defeat to the Paladins. "Take out a couple of miscues and we're playing a tight ballgame."

Tight ball game indeed as the Indians and Paladins from Pinecrest were locked in a 4-2 ballgame in the fifth inning.

Timely hitting by the Paladins and a variety of miscues by the Indians turned the game one-sided in the latter innings. Jackson Noblet came on in the sixth and shutdown the Pinecrest offense, striking out five of the six batters he faced.

The Indians wouldn't quit.

"Harrison did what Harrison does, he throws strikes, and Pinecrest was spot on with their hitting today," Vardo said. "They found a few more holes than we did. We were swinging the bat okay; we just left too many men in scoring position."

"We seem to be able to hit with nobody on, and when we've got runners on, we have a hard time pushing them across," Vardo said. "If we



Towns County baseball in action last week against George Walton Academy and Pinecrest Academy. In the George Walton game, the Indians mounted a ferocious rally in the late innings before falling 11-7. Head Coach Brain Vardo's squad doesn't know the meaning of the word 'quit' and have proven it all season long. The Indians are still mathematically in the hunt for the postseason in Class A's Power Rankings. Photos by Lowell Nicholson



could start hitting with runners in scoring position, we'd have a lot more 'W's' than 'L's.'"

Harrison Hobbs walked with one out in the bottom of the seventh, followed by another walk to Noblet. Adam Barrett singled, loading the bases and Vonya Baldwin singled to drive in the Indians third run.

Major Moss followed with a fielder's choice that scored the Indians fourth run. Dylan Roberts flied out deep

to centerfield to end the Towns County rally as the Paladins went home with an 11-4 region win.

In the two games against George Walton and Pinecrest, Baldwin collected four hits, Will DeVries collected two hits and three runs batted in, Hobbs had an RBI single, Noblet collected two hits, Jackson Taylor had a single, and Gavin Langelier had a single.

The Indians have an outside shot at the playoffs. They

also have a heavy load in front of them. To get to the playoffs, the Indians must win their final six games.

Vardo praised Baldwin, who had a late start due to his state-wrestling bid.

"He had trouble at the beginning of the season, but he's starting to hit," Vardo said. "We've got some guys who have really stepped up and are putting the ball in play. They're getting an opportunity and capitalizing on that. There's no

quit in these guys."

The best example that the Indians won't quit happened on Friday. The Indians got down 11-0 and rallied to make a game of it.

"They scored seven runs in the bottom of the sixth," Vardo said. "I wish they'd started a little bit sooner, but they won't quit."

Vardo said his team knows where they stand in terms of reaching the playoffs.

"We started the year with our first, second and third basemen, and our shortstop were all freshmen," Vardo said. "They aren't freshmen anymore. They play as well as you could expect. That bodes well for the future. There are plenty of positives for this season."

"Anything is possible," Vardo said. "I think if they focus, they can do great things. We're going to take it one game at a time and see what happens."

NASCAR 2014

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

"Happy" Harvick two-steps to Darlington win

Kevin Harvick put on a dominating performance Saturday night in winning Darlington's Sprint Cup race, which made him the first two-time winner this season. But it required two green-white-checkered restarts before he claimed the victory.

Harvick led 238 laps of the 374-lap race, but on the first g-w-c restart, he found himself in the fifth position, due to a four-tire pit stop.

We had a fast car and all we had to do was keep our heads down and dig all night," said Harvick. "We had four fresh tires, and I knew the restarts would favor us, because they only had two."

"We were able to hang on there at the end and I knew I had that high line - I hadn't showed it to them all night on the restarts and I wanted to save it until the very end. I kind of learned that last night as we were in the Nationwide race. It was a good tool in your tool bag to have there at the end."

Dale Earnhardt Jr. had a fast car, but due to only two new tires on the last two restarts, his car was no match for Harvick's.

"It's a little disappointing to come that close because I know I don't really run that well here and the opportunities to win are going to be very few compared to other tracks," said Earnhardt. "It hurts a little bit to come that close because we worked so hard to try to win races. Running second is great but nobody is going to really remember that. But we're proud of it."

"Sometimes if I admittedly say this isn't my best track, it's easy to sort of back off, but those guys really push the pedal and give me everything I can to give me the best chance to finish as best I can. They did that tonight. That was a great example of that."

Third-place finisher Jimmie Johnson, who started 26th is still winless after eight races.

"Yeah, just very happy to finish there in the top three," Johnson said. "I thought we had a shot at a win. I think if things stayed green after our last pit stop, we had a good chance at it, good shot at it. I'm happy with Chad's decision to go with two, and there were enough cars that took two that it gave us a little bit of a cushion, maybe enough of a cushion to make it four or five laps there."

Matt Kenseth was fourth, while Greg Biffle was fifth, and Kyle Busch was sixth.

Jeff Gordon, who finished seventh took the points lead for the first time since 2009.

"I thought we were a little bit better than him (Kevin Harvick) on certain runs," said Gordon. "But there towards the end, we kind of started fading. I got into the wall a little bit."

"From there, our night went downhill. We just made some mistakes and got behind. We were the last car on two tires and we just got beat up on those restarts. But...it's

not bad to come home seventh. I thought it was going to be worse than that."

Rookie Kyle Larson was eighth, followed by Tony Stewart, and Ryan Newman.

Top-16 leaders after 8 of 36: 1. Gordon-297, 2. Kenseth-296, 3. Edwards-278, 4. Earnhardt-271, 5. Johnson-270, 6. Kyle Busch-269, 7. Keselowski-246, 8. Logano-245, 9. Newman-236, 10. A. Dillon-235, 11. Biffle-227, 12. Stewart-224, 13. Vickers-224, 14. Larson-223, 15. Hamlin-223, 16. Bowyer-219. Note: NASCAR has said there will be at least 16 drivers in this year's Chase.

ELLIOTT GETS SECOND NATIONWIDE WIN

For the second time in two weeks, young Chase Elliott stole the show as he won Friday night's Nationwide race at Darlington for his second consecutive victory.

Elliott led three times for 52 laps of the 147-lap race, but had his work cut out for him as the race neared its completion. There was a caution with only five laps remaining. Most of the leaders pitted, and when the green flag was given indicating two laps, he was fifth.

Elliott Sadler was the leader, but he was unable to hold off the hard-charging 18-year-old from Dawsonville, Georgia.

The JR Motorsports driver worked his way through traffic and finally passed Sadler, who seemed to get loose coming off Turn 2 on the final lap.

"It was just crazy," Elliott said. "I didn't know what to expect starting that far back. I knew the guys on two tires were going to be a little slower than those on four. It happened to work out, and I was able to move through the traffic."

"I watched Elliott go into a couple of the corners, and I knew that if I caught him, I would have to pass on the outside. He got a little loose in two and gave me the outside, and that's where I wanted to be anyway."

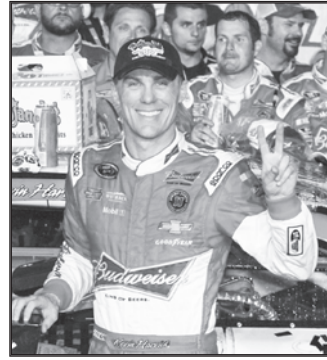
It was Elliott's second straight win after winning at Texas last week. He's also the youngest driver to win two Nationwide races in one season, at 18 years, 4 months, 14 days, and the youngest to win at Darlington.

Elliott Sadler, who finished second only took two tires during the last pit stop.

"It was a great call," Sadler said. "Two tires were the way to go. It gave us the track position we needed. My guys did what they do best and got me out of the pits. We just got very loose there in one and two and just tried to catch the car. Chase did a good job getting on the outside."

Matt Kenseth was third, followed by Kyle Busch, Joey Logano, Kyle Larson, Kevin Harvick, Regan Smith, Trevor Bayne, and Ty Dillon.

Top-10 leaders after 7 of 33: 1. Chase Elliott-271, 2. Smith-258,



Happy Kevin Harvick wins at Darlington

3. Sadler-251, 4. T. Dillon-248, 5. Bayne-241, 6. Scott-225, 7. Gaughan-215, 8. Kwasniewski-200, 9. Buescher-195, 10. Reed-172.

PETTY ADJUSTING TO LIFE WITHOUT WIFE.

Richard Petty was not at Darlington this past week.

He was at home mourning the death of his wife instead of his familiar spot at the racetrack. Lynda Petty died last month after battling cancer for several years. She was 72.

"He's doing pretty good," said son Kyle. "He's used to going to the racetracks and being at the racetracks alone, but he's not used to being at home and being alone. So I've stayed with him some, and my sisters have stayed some. It's just going to take time. They were together 57 years and even though he spent 50 of those 57 years on the road, according to him, at race tracks, it's been a lot harder and a lot tougher (than he thought)."

"My mother had been really sick for almost five years, so she fought pretty hard."

Petty has said that he will return to the track, sometime after Easter.

Weekend Racing: NASCAR will not hold any races next weekend, because of the Easter Holiday. The next racing weekend will be April 25th and 26th at Richmond, featuring the Sprint Cup and Nationwide teams.

Racing Trivia Question: Where is Jamie McMurray's hometown?

Last Week's Question: How many Grand National championships did Rex White win? Answer: Only one in 1960.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at hodges@race500.com.

VFW Golf League news

For the 2nd week in a row Danny Barrett's team won the VFW competition. The team of Danny Barrett, Vince Cooper, Bart Rodgers and Chuck Woodworth, combined to shoot 8 under for 18 holes, at Chatuge Shores. Again this week Barrett had another eagle, 2 this season. Until next week, hit 'em long and straight.

Butch Patterson, VFW golf chairman

Towns County football returning to Region 8-A after nine-year hiatus

By Todd Forrester
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Don't be surprised if the Towns County football program makes history in the fall.

For the first time since 2005, the Indians will take the field in August with the possibility of earning an 11th game in November. With the public-private school split in Class A, the Indians have a better chance than ever at reaching the program's first ever State Tournament.

Since first-year Head Coach Blair Harrison guided the Indians to a 4-1 record over the final five games in 2013, anticipation for the next season is at an all-time high. Coach Harrison is instilling a winning mentality into Towns County football. Confidence is becoming contagious in the locker room. Enthusiasm is beginning to simmer in the hallways of T.C.H.S. and optimism is starting to take root in the community.

"We definitely have more kids sign up than we did last year," Coach Harrison said. "I'm really excited about the numbers. We're going to be

in the 30's and that's a good number for us."

When region play begins in September, the Indians will be only one of two public schools (Commerce) in 8-AA, and like basketball, the power rankings will determine the fate of the 16 public schools who will vie for the Public School State Championship.

"We need to win the games that we can win and I think a 5-5 record will get us really close to getting in the playoffs, with the schedule that we play," Harrison said. "So if we go 5-5, I'm expecting to be in the playoffs, but we could even make it at 4-6."

With Towns being considered the new team in Region 8-A they were stuck with the final week of the season as their bye week. However, Coach Harrison sees the silver lining and believes that could actually benefit the Indians.

"We got in the region late and everyone had scheduled everybody, and I thought it was only fair that we take that spot," Coach Harrison said. "I'm not going to come into a region in my first year and demand they redraw and do everything over. But what that could do is allow

us to get someone back healthy right before playoff time. And if we're going to the playoffs, I will get to watch a team that we could be playing (in round one). I think it sets up perfect for us and I am fine with it."

Another change that will have an immediate impact is Coach Harrison's decision to cancel spring practice so his team will be allowed to pick up a second scrimmage game in August.

"There is a new rule this year that says if you don't have spring practice, you can pick up another scrimmage in the fall," Harrison said. "We have kids playing soccer and baseball, and all of my coaches are coaching other things, so I really don't have a staff. I just felt like it was best for us to just take another scrimmage game instead of wasting two weeks. It's a really good rule for the smaller schools."

In the coming weeks the Towns County Herald will take a look at each of the Indians' opponents, both region and non-region, and discuss with Coach Harrison the future, the challenges, and changes that Towns County football can and will see in 2014 and beyond.

2014 Varsity Football Schedule

Date	Time	Team
August 15 th	7:30 (Scrimmage)	Rabun-Gap
August 22 nd	7:30 (Scrimmage)	@Hayesville
August 29 th	7:30	Union Co.
September 6 th	7:30	@Mt. Vernon (Saturday)
September 12 th	7:30	Lakeview Academy
September 19 th	7:30*	Hebron Christian
September 26 th	7:30	@GWA
October 3 rd	7:30	Athens Academy
October 10 th	7:30	@Athens Christian
October 17 th	7:30#	Prince Avenue
October 24 th	8:00	@Commerce
October 31 st	7:30	@Providence

*Indicates Homecoming Night

Indicates Senior Night