

# Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports



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## A trip down Memory Lane: a tribute to past Towns County Sports Teams

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This is the first segment of a two-part series taking Towns County sports fans on a trip down memory lane with Towns County Herald Basketball Beat writer Jerry Kendall. Part 2 will appear in the April 13th edition of the Towns County Herald.

Some of the events and the individuals who created them during the recently completed Towns County High School basketball season have brought about a wealth of memories about past heroics in the world of sports in Towns County. Since prior trips down memory lane have been well received by readers, your reporter decided to close out the 2011 basketball season with another of those trips.

One such trip has already taken place during the season as a result of Jordan Moss reaching the 1,000 career points plateau in girls' basketball as we looked at the exploits of her father and uncle, Kevin and Ketrone Moss; her brother Boone; and her cousins Kindle, McKenzi, and Major; but a number of additional members of this year's Lady Indians and Indians squads bring similar memories.

It's very common in small counties for athletes to have parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and on and on who have provided or continue to provide athletic excellence and Towns County is far from being an exception. Identifying all such relatives would be endless so this venture will include only highlights of prior events and accomplishments of close relatives in most cases with a few unique exceptions.

This trip down memory lane will be broken into two separate articles. This week, we will look at three momentous team accomplishments with a direct connection to some of the TCHS basketball players of the recently completed season. A future article will look briefly at individual players from the past with a family connection to this year's teams.

### TEAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

#### 1972 LADY INDIANS

Your reporter mentioned in an earlier article that the 1972 Lady Indians Basketball Team established a school record 87.5 winning percentage but inadvertently failed to mention the team's sparkling record of 21-3 established while schools were limited to fewer regular season games than today. That winning percentage record stood alone for 36 years until tied by the 2008 State Final Four Team with a 28-4 record. This year's edition of Lady Indians, of course, set a new standard with a 93.1 winning percentage as a result of their 27-2 record.

The 1972 Lady Indians competed for the second of just two years in Class C prior to this classification being discontinued by the Georgia High School Association and the Lady Indians returning to the familiar Class B classification where they had previously "resided" for many years. Towns County sports teams had actually long qualified for Class C due to the school's small enrollment but chose to play at the Class B level due to a scarcity of Class C schools in the area prior to the 1971 and 1972 seasons.

In addition to setting a new winning percentage record for basketball during the 1972 season, the Lady Indians additionally won the school's first

sub-region tournament championship in basketball. They entered sub-region tournament play with an 18-2 record with the two regular season losses being to Union County, still participating in Class B, but they won both games against rival Hayesville, prominent sub-region foe Dawson County, Class A Lumpkin County, and Class B Rabun County.

The Lady Indians swept three straight games from Woody Gap, East Fannin, and Jackson County, actually in the Union County gym, in winning the Sub-Region 4C North Tournament Championship. There were just four regions in Class C that year with two teams from each region qualifying for the state tournament.

The Lady Indians fell in the first round of the four team Region 4C Tournament at Forsyth County High School in Cumming to the Social Circle girls who lost in the semi finals to either Greater Atlanta Christian or Loganville. Those two teams competed for the region championship with GAC going on to win the state tournament by sweeping past Whigham, Cave Spring, and East Coweta in the Macon Coliseum.

With all this being stated, the interesting member of that 1972 team in the context of this article is Melba Hunter Blythe, a four year starter for the Lady Indians during this, her junior year. Melba played the position of "rover" under the rules of the day and averaged 6.5 points and a team leading 10.2 rebounds per game. The success of that 1972 team propelled the Lady Indians on an incredible eight year run during which they won 165 games, six sub-region tournaments and a region tournament, and made four state tournament appearances when just two teams from each region qualified for the tournament.

The Lady Indians followed up that 1972 sub-region championship year by compiling a 20-6 record against a more difficult schedule in 1973 upon the return to Class B and became the first Towns County sports team to qualify for the state tournament with Melba playing a vital role in that accomplishment. She provided 9 points and 8 rebounds in a 67-31 victory over Athens Academy and 12 points on six for seven shooting and 12 rebounds in the state tournament clinching 50-46 win over Jackson County.

The Lady Indians then came oh so close to winning their first region championship and most Towns Countians attending the game think they did against Union County without getting credit for the win. Sara Cochran (Rogers) sank a field goal from mid court at the end of regulation or the first overtime that was disputably ruled too late in an eventual 35-33 loss to the Lady Panthers with Melba contributing 10 points and 7 rebounds in that game.

For the season, Melba averaged 8.9 points per game and again led her team in rebounds with an average of 8.8 per game. She is the mother of Lady Indian Sophomores Dadrion and Davilyn Blythe and freshman Lady Indian JV player Destiny Blythe. A thirteen year old freshman substitute but future star player for the Lady Indians on that 1972 team was Doris Moss (Welch), the grandmother of Indians Freshman JV Player Slade Davenport.

1975 INDIANS - Seeing the inspiring play of Lady Indians Freshman Eryn Cochran during the recently completed season brought memories to

long time TCHS fans of her father, Shell Cochran, a stand-out senior on the Indians' 1975 Region Championship Team. That team to this day remains the only Indians basketball team to win a region championship and Shell played a crucial role in a most interesting and unlikely accomplishment under the circumstances.

The Indians featured seven seniors as their primary players and were ranked second in the state in Class B with a 20-2 record entering post season tournament play. They had lost very close back to back games at Union County and East Fannin following a 13-0 start to the season but responded with seven straight wins as they entered post season play. They lost a second game to an outstanding Union County team in the Sub-Region Tournament Championship Game at Union County, however, and were stung the next morning upon learning that Indians superstar Eddie Rushton had the mumps and would miss the region tournament.

It was business as usual, however, as the Indians followed the lead of Shell Cochran, who scored 13 and 18 points, in taking 62-50 and 40-34 victories over Banks County and Toccoa Falls in qualifying for a second straight trip to the Class B State Tournament. Without Rushton in the lineup, a region championship seemed to be out of the question against the mighty Buford Wolves who entered the championship game with a 20-6 record against a very formidable schedule. No one convinced the Indians of that impossibility, however, as Shell scored 22 points and, as a post player, played an unaccustomed but vital ball handling role in the absence of Rushton as the Indians survived Buford's full court man to man defense and a late Wolves rally in taking a 68-65 victory and the Region 8B Championship.

With Rushton recovered from the mumps but at less than full strength for a restricted role nearly two weeks after the region tournament, the Indians fell in the final minute of play to Montgomery County 58-54 in the first round of the Class B State Tournament in the Macon Coliseum, completing their season with a 24-4 record. Montgomery County went on to defeat Crawford County and Pace Academy before finishing as state runner up after falling by just a 63-55 score to Monticello in the championship game.

Shell Cochran averaged 8.9 points and 5.4 rebounds per game, good for fourth place in each category on a well balanced team, during that 1975 championship season. Under the circumstances of the Lady Indians having won just three region championships and the Indians one in basketball, the father and daughter combination of Shell and Eryn Cochran hold the distinction of being prime contributors to half of the region basketball championships accomplished at TCHS to this date.

1977 LADY INDIANS - The final team accomplishment to be recognized with a connection to the 2011 basketball season is that of the 1977 Lady Indians who finished with a 23-6 record and won the only girls region championship 32 years prior to their recent such successes of 2009 and 2011.

The Lady Indians entered post season play with a 17-5 record and a tie for first place in the sub-region with Rabun County with the Lady Indians and Lady

Wildcats having swept their regular season sub-region opponents with the exception of winning at home against each other.

The Lady Indians took three straight victories over Tallulah Falls, Union County, and Banks County for the Sub-Region 8A North Tournament Championship, aided immeasurably by an incredible 3-2 Banks County win over the outstanding Rabun County Lady Wildcats in the tournament semi-finals. No, that's not a misprint on the score as usually high scoring Rabun, foolishly in hindsight, allowed Banks to stall the ball for the entire game rather than come out of their zone defense.

The Lady Indians defeated Jackson County by 11 points in the first round and Loganville by two in the region semifinals after Loganville took a 70-69 overtime victory over Rabun County in the opening round. These two victories qualified the Lady Indians for their third state tournament appearance in five years but with the mighty Buford Lady Wolves standing firmly in their path for the Region 8B Championship Game.

The Lady Wolves held perhaps as much as a five to six inch average height advantage over the Lady Indians and entered the game with a 23-5 record, including the championship of the prestigious Gwinnett County Christmas Tournament with victories over Region 8AAA Champion South Gwinnett and Region 8AA runner up Norcross included. Class AAA was the highest of four classifications in effect in Georgia at that time.

Trailing 38-24 midway through the third quarter, the Lady Indians rallied to within 39-32 after three quarters and to a 49-49 tie by the end of regulation before taking a stunning 54-51 overtime victory with a packed Johnson High School Gym in Hall County including fans from all over northeast Georgia roaring their approval at the feat of the heavy underdog Lady Indians. The always quotable Buford head coach Butch Britt commented after the game, "I thought we would have Towns' girls with their tongues hanging out by the end of the third quarter but it was my girls who had their tongues hanging out." In a departure from the pattern of today of teams using numerous players, each team used just six players in this championship game.

It is Janine Galloway (Gilfilian) who provides the connection between the Lady Indians' first region basketball championship and this year's TCHS teams. She is the mother of Indian Senior Corbin Gilfilian and middle school Lady Indian Carly Gilfilian. She averaged 8.2 points and 9.0 rebounds per game as what might have been considered the power forward on her team in those days but the number four position player today.

For completeness as related to the 1977 team, a mention of team defense must be made. There has likely never been and will likely never be again a defensive unit so effective as on this team which used a tenacious 2-3 zone in the second year of full court play to hold usually high scoring teams far below their accustomed scoring average.

Being just a junior on the region championship team, Janine made the unusual shift from power forward as a junior to point guard or what would be referred to as the number one



Freshman Eryn Cochran (10) is the daughter of Shell Cochran, who helped lead the Indians to a Region title in 1975 Photo by James Reese.



Corbin Gilfilian, (3) is a legacy link to the Lady Indians' first Region championship in 1977 (Lady Indians' Janine Galloway Gilfilian) Photo by James Reese.

position today as a senior upon the loss of point guard Dianne Palmer to graduation and the emergence of several tall inside players for the 1978 season. The Lady Indians continued to impress as they finished with a 22-6 record, including a late season 10 game winning streak in an overall 16-1 run and a stunning Sub-Region 8B North Tournament Championship.

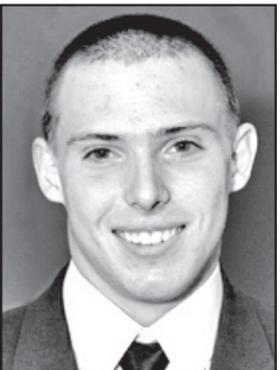
The Sub-Region Championship came as a result of three straight victories over Tallulah Falls, Union County, and Rabun County in a brand new Rabun County Gym. The win over Rabun County was especially sweet as the Lady Wildcats had probably their best team ever until their successes of the last few years and entered the game with just three losses, two to Class AA power Franklin County and the other to the Lady Indians in the Towns County Gym.

The Lady Indians over-

came a 27-13 first half deficit in taking a 49-43 victory in that 1978 championship game. Janine scored 14 points in that victory, including 12 points with three assists the last half and with 4 for 4 free throw shooting in the closing minutes the fourth quarter included. The Lady Indians outscored Rabun 18-6 in the fourth quarter in turning a 37-31 deficit into the 49-43 victory. Janine averaged 8.6 points and 5.7 rebounds per game while leading her team in assists for the 1978 season at the new point guard position.

Well, this concludes the team accomplishment recognitions with some individual recognitions to come next time. The summaries above just tip the surface of the seasons described with a focus on the players being honored and the contributions of so many other Lady Indians and Indians not included here due to space considerations.

## Zeke Gribble making an impact on the diamond for Mountain Lions



Zeke Gribble, Young Harris Col-

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Zeke Gribble is back sooner than expected from a serious shoulder injury suffered last year.

The former Towns County Indian, playing his first full season for Coach Rick Robinson at Young Harris College is having quite the impact for the Mountain Lions (18-18).

On Saturday, Gribble drove in the go-ahead run

against North Greenville in the night cap of a double header at Zell B. Miller Field.

The bottom of the fourth inning started with YHC tied with North Greenville 1-1. The Mountain Lions' third baseman Evan Carr led off the inning by flying out to centerfield. First baseman Jack Morrow followed Carr's at bat by striking out. With two outs, right fielder Trey Rogers sent a 2-2 pitch down the left field line for a double. Enter second baseman Gribble, who lined a 1-0 pitch up the middle for an RBI single. Gribble advanced to second on a wild pitch and he scored an insurance run for YHC as catcher Bowen Klosinski reached base on a two-base error by the Crusaders' shortstop David Frazier.

The Mountain Lions held on for the 3-1 win over North Greenville. Freshman Brice Merritt picked up the win for the Mountain Lions and Sean Willingham took the loss for the Crusaders.

In 24 plate appearances, Gribble, a redshirt freshman, has five hits, three walks, been hit twice by errant pitches, and

had a sacrifice fly and a sacrifice bunt. He's scored seven runs and drove in five runs to go with a .294 season batting average.

Gribble also has been perfect in the field, recording a 1.000 fielding average on seven chances at second and third base.

On some days, Coach Robinson has Gribble penciled in as his designated hitter as well.

The fact that Gribble is playing this season is amazing. He had been told by doctors that he would miss the entire baseball season with a serious shoulder injury suffered last season. However, during a check up several weeks ago, the doctor surprised Gribble by telling him that he was cleared to play.

With Gribble in the lineup, the young Mountain Lions are making an impact in the Peach Belt Conference.

The Mountain Lions are on the road this week taking at USC-Aiken in Aiken, SC and Southern Wesleyan in Central, SC. They'll spend the weekend in Bristol, Tenn. taking on King College in a three-game series.

## TCMS Diamond Indians fall short in season finale



Gavin Langcher steals a base against Lumpkin County Photo by Lowell Nicholson

The Towns County Middle School Indians baseball team finished its 2011 regular season on Saturday in Tiger against the Rabun County Wildcats.

Coach Rick Ellis' Indians battled against the Wildcats, but came up short 9-5. Dallas Manus was stellar on the hill, but the Indians offense just couldn't get on track against the Wildcats' pitching staff.

The following players

donned the TCMS baseball uniforms for the Indians in 2011:

Dallas Manus, Gavin Langcher, Cruz Shook, Kyle Davis, Curtis Swanson, Boone Moss, Jerad Shook, Lane Kimsey, Dylan Roberts, Anthony Hooper, Dale Forrester, Russell Cox, Grayson Carver and Dillon Ingram.

Congrats to the 2011 Towns County Middle School Indians baseball team.



Cruz Shook lines a single against Lumpkin County Photo by Lowell Nicholson