

Sports

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Indians fall to rapid Athens Academy start

By Jerry Kendall

In this the third year for Athens Christian Head Coach Ron Link at the school, the Eagles have become known as the team with new players each year. They had three youthful newcomers to their program two years ago and added two foreign superstars for one year last year, propelling them to the top of Region 8A. With two far less spectacular but solid replacements for last year's departing players, the original three additions on hand, and a spectacular 6'7" sophomore, the Eagles provide a formidable opponent for Region 8A foes.

With the extreme quickness of the Athens team not possible to duplicate for the Indians during practice, it becomes an on the job task to try and adjust to their in your face pressure which resulted in numerous turnovers and an early explosion of points for the Eagles. A trey by Devin Henderson a minute into the game gave the Indians their only lead of 3-1 with the Eagles racing out to a 25-12 first quarter lead which became 48-17 by the 3:14 mark of the second quarter.

After that, the Indians reduced the lead to 56-32 by intermission, played on nearly even terms with the Eagles for a 75-49 score after three quarters, and then outscored the Eagles in the fourth in pulling to within 85-63 by the final buzzer. It wasn't a matter of the Eagles resting their regulars and allowing the Indians to reduce the big lead as the Eagles used just eight players in the game with the top four scoring seventy three and the top six contributing eighty two of their eighty five points.



Rylan Albach drives over an Athens Christian Eagle on his way to the glass.

The loss leaves the Indians with a 2-6 overall record but 2-1 in Region 8A with victories over Tallulah Falls and Prince Avenue. The Eagles, like the Lady Indians hold first place in the region with a 3-0 record although Commerce remains undefeated in region play but with just two wins.

The Indians placed Bradley Swanson and John

Bleckley in double figures with 20 and 13 points respectively against Athens Christian. Other top scorers were Rylan Albach with 9 points, Ryan Tallent with 8 in the second quarter, Devin Henderson with 6, and Brandon Henderson with 5. Leading in assists were Bleckley with 5 and Swanson with 3.

Photo by Jim/Lisa Bryant

Lady Indians destroy AC, claim top spot in Region 8A

By Jerry Kendall

The Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Basketball Team entered last Saturday's home game with Athens Christian on a bit of an upswing after sending the Prince Avenue Ladies to their first loss of the season on Friday night. There were questions to be answered, however, as they faced off against the Lady Eagles who entered with just a 2-5 record but with four of the losses to Class AAA and AAAA schools and three of those being decided by between twelve and eighteen points.

Of greater significance was Athens having lost by just a 43-39 score on Tuesday to Social Circle and having defeated Lakeview Academy 39-34 on Friday. These two Region 8A opponents were expected to be among the contenders for this year's Region 8A championship.

The Lady Indians didn't require much time to establish a pattern which would serve them well against Athens Christian, embarking on a 19-7 run the final 4:43 of the first quarter for a 25-11 advantage. By the mid point of the second quarter, they had sunk seven 3-pointers with the final three of those coming between the 4:43 and 4:02 marks of that quarter for a 41-14 lead. They weren't through, however, as they continued on to a 53-20 bulge by intermission and led 67-28 after three quarters on the way to a 75-35 conquest.

With the completion of region play on Saturday, more surprises were in store with Lakeview handing the Hebron girls their first loss after Hebron had sent Athens Academy



Ali Bleckley shoots in the paint in 75-35 win over the AC Birds.

to defeat in the region for the first time on Friday. Further, Athens Academy defeated Social Circle on the road on Saturday, leaving the Lady Indians as the only undefeated team in the region and in first place with a 3-0 record.

Nine Lady Indians saw action in the game with eight entering the scoring column and seven being credited with

at least one assist. Gabby Arencibia led a balanced scoring attack with 14 points with other leaders being Ali Bleckley with 13, Jordan Moss with 12, Kerri Abernathy with 11, Melissa Conrad and Lindsay Patton with 8 each, and Heather Hamilton with 7. Bleckley and Moss took the lead in assists with 4 each.

Photo by Jim/Lisa Bryant

Lady Indians and Indians rebound with impressive wins at Prince Avenue

By Jerry Kendall

With nearly a week to ponder decisive losses at Class AA Rabun County and Class AA Union County the previous weekend, the Towns County Lady Indians and Indians Varsity Basketball teams provided a very satisfying turnaround for their followers on Friday night at Prince Avenue Christian School near Athens. Both teams brushed aside a long trip by bus in unruly weather with a threat of icy precipitation to take the measure of the home standing Lady Wolverines who entered the game with a 7-0 record and the Wolverines who had doubled last year's win total with a 4-3 record.

A 53-41 win by the Lady Indians and a 67-57 victory by the Indians were remarkably similar in how they developed. Each of the Towns teams led for most of the game and had a ready answer each time Prince Avenue mounted a challenge.

With the victories at Prince Avenue, the Lady Indians and Indians both improved their record to 2-0 in Region 8A.

LADY INDIANS - After taking a 7-2 lead barely two and a half minutes into the game, the Lady Indians went cold for awhile with Prince Avenue taking a short lived 9-8 lead and forcing an 11-11 tie during the last minute of the first quarter. The Lady Indians responded each time with a trey by Ali Bleckley and a basket by Melissa Conrad for 11-9 and 13-11 leads with the latter being the score at the end of the first quarter.

The Lady Indians maintained leads of between one and five points in the second quarter until a 7-2 run the final 2:02 of the stanza gave them a 31-22 lead at intermission. An ice cold start by the Lady Indians in the third quarter, however, opened the door for the Lady Wolverines who ral-

lied to a 32-32 tie with 3:51 on the clock and a 35-34 lead on a trey with 2:11 remaining in the quarter.

With the Lady Wolverines having stung the Lady Indians with three treys in just over four minutes of playing time, the Lady Indians called time out and switched to a man to man defense. This move stopped the Lady Wolverines cold with the Lady Indians striking for a 13-0 run and a 47-35 lead with 4:17 left in the game.

Gabby Arencibia triggered what turned out to be the decisive run with a trey, giving the Lady Indians the lead for good at 37-35 at the 1:35 mark of the third quarter. Arencibia added a second trey at the start of the fourth quarter and she had help from four teammates who dented the score board during the run. The two teams played on even terms the final 3:42 of the game

with the Lady Indians taking a 53-41 victory.

Arencibia included four treys in a team leading 14 point performance while Conrad, Kerri Abernathy, and Jordan Moss scored in every quarter in contributing 13, 11, and 8 points respectively and Bleckley totaled 6 points on a pair of treys in the first quarter. Bleckley and Moss led in assists with 3 each according to your reporter's tally. Such vital contributions as rebounds and steals are usually not addressed in the newspaper articles but three late steals by Moss were especially noteworthy as the Lady Indians protected their lead in closing out the victory.

INDIANS - Hot 3-point shooting highlighted the first quarter and a half of the Indians game with Prince Avenue with the trio of Bradley Swanson, Ethan Burch, and John Bleckley sinking two each as

compared to a total of three by the Wolverines. The Indians overcame three early deficits of two point with the first trey by Burch at the 2:57 mark of the first quarter giving them an 8-7 lead they would hold by mostly small margins for most of the remainder of the game.

An 8-0 Prince run between the 4:02 and the 2:37 marks of the second quarter had them ahead 29-25 but the Indians responded with an 8-0 run of their own for a 33-29 lead which became 33-31 at intermission. This run was highlighted by four points and a steal by Rylan Albach and a field goal and assist each by Bleckley and Swanson with Swanson's basket at the 1:14 mark giving the Indians a lead they would never relinquish.

The Indians led by as few as two points and as many as eight with the overall play of DJ Rogers highlighting the

third quarter with Rogers scoring their final six points on a trey, a deuce, and a free throw as they led 49-45 at quarter's end. A basket by Brandon Henderson, two free throws by Bleckley, and a bucket by Swanson at the start of the fourth quarter gave the Indians a 55-45 lead by the 5:20 mark and the Wolverines never got closer than six points on three occasions after that as the Indians closed out a 67-57 victory.

The Indians got excellent scoring balance in the game with Bleckley and Brandon Henderson each scoring in every quarter and leading with 18 and 12 points respectively but followed closely by Swanson with 11, Albach and Burch with 9 each, and Rogers with 8. Leading in assists were Bleckley and Swanson with 4 each and Devin Henderson with 3.

TCHS holds annual softball banquet



Seniors Haley Ledford, Chelsey Noblet and Heather Hamilton are flanked by their softball teammates at the annual Indians' Softball Awards Banquet.

By Jim Bryant
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Wednesday night, the annual TCHS softball banquet celebrated their season and honored several players with accolades. The photo-plaques were presented to the honorees by softball head coach, Shannon Floyd after the players enjoyed a special meal at Monte Albans Mexican Restaurant. Coach Floyd wished to thank all the players

and fans who supported the program this season. Special thanks to his assistant coaches, Jessica Anderson, Brad Wilson, Michael Anderson, score keeper Melanie Beighley and others in the dugout each game to help keep the games running smoothly.

Receiving special awards for the 2009 softball season were: Most Improved, Kayla Moody and Ashley Thrasher;

Most Valuable Player, Kayla Roberts; Offensive Player of the Year, Claire Wilson; Defensive Player of the Year, Kayla Roberts; All-Round Pitcher of the Year, Brittany Ledford; Encourager Award, Ali Bleckley and Senior Awards, Chelsey Noblet, Haley Ledford and Heather Hamilton. All of the players received certificates of participation.

Photo by Jim/Lisa Bryant

TCHS holds annual Cross Country banquet



Coach Jeannie Ledford-Stephens (center) with her senior cross country runners, Melissa Conrad, Tommy Black, Amy Vardeman and Ethan Burch.

By Jim Bryant
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The Towns County Indians took to the banquet table Wednesday night to honor the 2009 cross country team. Brothers Willow Restaurant in Young Harris was the site for the accolades to be awarded. It was an emotional affair, as Coach Jeannie Ledford-Stephens said farewell to four of her seniors. Also generating strong emotions was the 4x4 Award presented to Ledford-Stephens, Melissa Conrad and Amy Vardeman for their

attendance at state all four years of high school. During the last four years, the Indians have been to state four times finishing 6th 2006; 8th 2007; 9th 2008 and 15th 2009. They have been ranked in the top ten teams in Class A three out of four of those years, finishing as the top public school during those years. The cross country team and their loyal boosters also gave their coach another award for her work with the runnes from both the high school and middle school since she became cross country

coach in 2000. Receiving special MVP awards at the banquet were: Middle School Minis Bradley Rogers and Ansley Vardeman. Receiving Senior Awards for the varsity team were Ethan Burch, Thomas Black, Melissa Conrad and Amy Vardeman. Of special note was the fact that Melissa Conrad and Amy Vardeman are the only senior athletes as of this date that have participated in a state championship every year they have been in high school.

Photo submitted

