

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

www.townscountyherald.net • E-mail: tcherald@windstream.net

Lady Indians fall to late scoring surge at Calhoun County

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

EDISON - The Towns County Lady Indians varsity basketball team faced a quite formidable task last Thursday when they traveled to Edison in deep South Georgia near Albany to face the Calhoun County Lady Cougars in the Sweet Sixteen round of the Class A Public State Tournament.

Perhaps a bit of research and evaluation of the circumstances faced may ease the disappointment of the Lady Indians falling short of victory against Calhoun County.

Many factors determining the outcome of any game are present but with significantly more such factors present for this particular game. Of greatest importance is Calhoun County being a most formidable opponent with a 26-2 record and third seeded in the state tournament with the Lady Indians being a fourteenth seed with a 14-12 record although with evidence of a far more challenging schedule than Calhoun County had faced as revealed pretty much by the margins of victory they had enjoyed which will be explored later.

Other common factors determining the outcome of any games include hot or cold shooting, turnovers, rebounding strength and dominance, and size and quickness of the opposing players with a mixture of such factors present or missing to varying degrees as related to both teams.

But the challenge for the Lady Indians becomes even more daunting when you add facts of their having to travel around three hundred miles on a school bus, play before a full house of mostly enthusiastic Lady Cougar fans, and have a cold shooting night quite the opposite of their game against Lanier County, a team with a long bus ride themselves, just six nights earlier against the bigger and more physical Calhoun County squad.

Calhoun County 52, Lady Indians 31 - With all these factors present, the show must go on, however, with the Lady Cougars, who were not known for strong 3-point shooting, using three treys and an old fashioned three point play to advantage in the first quarter in springing out to 6-0, 11-3, 16-8, and 21-12 leads.

The Lady Indians refused to go away, however, as they closed the gap three times within the first quarter. A free throw by sophomore Vanessa Floyd and a steal and runner by senior Kristen Byers got them within 6-3 at the 4:51 mark, a trey by Floyd and a steal and basket by senior Taylor Cornett to within 11-8 at 2:30, and two deuces by Floyd to within 16-12 at fifty one seconds. The Lady Cougars finished the quarter, however, on a putback basket at thirty two seconds and a trey as time expired for the aforementioned 21-12 lead at quarter's end.

As might be expected, the Lady Cougars' scored eight of their first quarter points on three field goals and two free throws as a result of putbacks while the Lady Indians used their trademark defensive presence to account for steals and four of their points in first quarter action.

The Lady Indians' defensive prowess would especially serve them well throughout the second quarter and well into the third as they used a 9-2 run on two deuces and three for four free throw shooting by Floyd and a drive for a deuce by Byers for just a 23-21 deficit at 4:19 of the second quarter.

And two deuces by Cal-



Sophomore Kennedi Henson looks on as senior Taylor Cornett drops in a finger roll layup at Calhoun County. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

houn were almost matched by two more free throws by Floyd and one by sophomore Kennedi Henson for just a 27-24 deficit at 1:03 which became 28-24 at intermission on a late Lady Cougar free throw.

The Lady Indians' defense had allowed just seven points by the normally high powered Calhoun County offense in the second quarter and both teams were scoreless for more than three minutes at the start of the third quarter before a Lady Cougar deuce got them a 30-24 lead at the 4:51 mark. Cornett responded with a trey at 4:26 for just a 30-27 Lady Indians deficit in completing a 15-9 Towns run over more than eleven and a half minutes of playing time.

Ice cold shooting would follow for the Lady Indians, however, as the Lady Cougars would use three deuces and four for five free throw shooting the final 4:06 of the quarter with one of the deuces being on a putback basket and one on a three point play off a steal for a 40-27 lead entering the fourth quarter.

They Lady Cougars then outscored the Lady Indians 12-4 in taking a 52-31 victory significantly more competitive than the final score might indicate to those not seeing the game. The fourth quarter baskets by the Lady Indians were made off a steal and drive for the goal by junior Sophia Shook and on a putback basket by sophomore Remington Parker.

The Lady Indians were led in scoring for the game by Floyd with 17 points, Cornett with 5, and Byers with 4 while Cornett led in assists with 2 according to your reporter's unofficial tally. Leaders in rebounds for the Lady Indians against the physically very strong inside presence of the Lady Cougars were Henson with 8, Floyd and Parker with 3 each, and Shook with 2 according to the tally of team statistician Kendall Floyd whose provision of these stats during the season is much appreciated.

For readers who may think of the twenty one points margin of victory by Calhoun County being quite large may want to consider that twelve of the Lady Cougars twenty five on the court victories (they got one win by forfeit) were by forty or more points with seven of those being by fifty or more. And just four of their wins were by fewer than the twenty one points margin over the Lady Indians with these being by

twenty, eighteen, thirteen, and eight points.

It will never be known but speculation by the Lady Indians and their followers is surely reasonable as to how much effect the trip of some three hundred miles on a school bus combined with the hard fought and quite physical game had on the late scoring success by the Lady Cougars. Of a certainty, the Lady Indians' trademark defense can be considered very effective against Calhoun County as twelve of their points were a direct result of putback attempts and three as a result of a turnover according to your reporter's unofficial notes, leaving no more that thirty seven points being considered as charged to the defense.

Hopefully, a bit more analysis by your reporter will be of interest as a look at the success of the Lady Indians' opponents is quite noteworthy. As of the close of the season, nineteen of twenty seven games were against teams with at least fourteen wins and with twelve of those with seventeen or more victories. Further, fifteen of the games were against state tournament teams with five more against Union County and Fannin County who each missed the state tournament by just three points and two more against Lumpkin County who missed by just five points with these three teams just missing their state tournament being Class AA and AAA opponents.

In conclusion, in your reporter's opinion the Lady Indians and their supporters can be very proud of their success as one of the smaller public schools in the state with a 14-12 record and a tie for second place in Region 8A against a very competitive schedule as described above.

TCHS All Region Selections - The 2019 All-Region Basketball Teams were recently announced as selected by the coaches in Region 8A with votes not allowed for members of the coaches' teams with three Lady Indians and two Indians along with Lady Indians head coach Brian Hunnicutt receiving recognition.

Lady Indian sophomore Kennedi Henson was chosen for the five member girls first team while senior Taylor Cornett and sophomore Vanessa Floyd received honorable mention recognition for the second year in a row. Indians sophomore Kolby Moss was chosen for the five

member second team while senior Will Travis received honorable mention recognition. Floyd received some first and second team votes and Moss received some first team votes as well.

And Lady Indians head coach Brian Hunnicutt was named the Region 8-A Girls Coach of the Year with this being not only a tribute to his leadership but the accomplishments of the team as well with their finishing in a three way tie for second place in regular season region play.

It is a special tribute that the opposing region coaches recognized the successes of the team which rallied from just a 3-6 start to go 11-7 against a very challenging schedule both inside and outside the region against mostly higher classification public schools the rest of the season with details of the challenging schedule included in coverage of their final game against Calhoun County.

Congratulations are extended from the Towns County Herald and your reporter to Kennedi, Taylor, Vanessa, Kolby, Will, and Coach Hunnicutt for these well deserved recognitions.

Time to Say Goodbye - Perhaps the most difficult moment for any athlete at the high school or other levels of play is the realization that their career at that level has come to an end. This realization is compounded by the fact that the final game for seniors is certain to be a loss with exceptions of being state champions as post season play is set up in Georgia. Fortunately, there are more pleasant memories to override the final game being a loss with the ability for players and their supporters to recall those occurrences more vividly as time passes.

The recent Region 8A Tournament game against Riverside Military Academy at Commerce marked the final appearances for Indian seniors Trevor Bradley, Brett Denton, and Will Travis. Senior Trent Bradshaw also saw his career come to an end at Commerce but due to an ankle injury during the Indians' regular season game at that school on January 18, resulting in his missing his team's final seven games. And last week's state tournament game at Calhoun County High School in Edison marked the final appearances for Lady Indian seniors Kristen Byers, Taylor Cornett, and Kennlee Denton

various recreation, middle school, and high school teams. In reality, the often intense action fans see on the court during games represents just a tiny percentage of the time and effort to achieve various accomplishments along with much time and monetary expense required for their families for many years, including prior to their high school careers.

Individual and team accomplishments have been addressed at length for each of these players during their careers in articles in the Towns County Herald with these articles being available in the archives on the newspaper's website at www.townscountyherald.net for those who would like to pursue viewing the coverage of some quite notable accomplishments.

Many thanks are extended from the Towns County Herald and this reporter to these seniors for their many hours of dedicated and highly regarded service to their school and teams and best wishes are extended to each of them for the future.

Indians free throw shooting kudos addendum - A general type mention of free throw excellence by the Towns County Indians teammates of Kolby Moss was provided recently with individual accomplishments other than the historic success by Moss not provided. Upon taking the time to explore the individual achievements of Moss' teammates, your reporter

See *Basketball*, Page 3B