

Towns County Sports

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Lady Indians win big at area; boys and girls headed to state

Towns County Girls fighting to win sixth straight state championship title

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
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The Towns County High School Lady Indians earned their second straight Cross Country area title during the Thursday, Oct. 26, GHSA Class A Public Area 4 Championship.

And since the boys' finished strong with a Third-Place victory in the same competition at Georgia Military College in Milledgeville, both the Indians and Lady Indians are headed for the Big Show this weekend.

The Towns County runners will join the best in the state for the GHSA Class A Public State Championship in Carrollton on Saturday, Nov. 4, with the boys running at 2 p.m. and the girls at 2:45 p.m.

Towns County's boys went to the Oct. 26 area meet looking to claim the fourth spot to compete at state, and thanks to the leadership of senior Kaine Hoffman, in concert with the strength of freshmen Jordan Lovelace and Liam King, they earned better than that with a Third-Place finish.

The Indians man pack consists of seniors Kaine Hoffman and Xavier Hogsed; junior Caleb Ledford; sophomores Blythe Smith and Ryan Tyler; and freshmen Liam King and Jordan Lovelace.

As for the Lady Indians, Hannah Whitehead, Taralee Arrowood and Taylor Cornett were part of the All Area team in the Oct. 26 race, and senior Cassandra Kelly received a medal in the Open/JV race for



being in the Top 10.

"They strive for success in all the things they do," said Cross Country Head Coach Jeannie Ledford. "They are an amazing group of young ladies. The unity between them is a major factor that gives them a competitive edge."

Sara Beth Hobbs, who has been on managing duties due to an injury, has returned

to running, and she will take the line with her fellow seniors as the seventh girl at the state competition.

Through it all, the Lady Indians have come a long way.

"Starting the season struggling for enough runners to compete as a team, then earning Area Champions, reminds the Lady Indians to be humbly grateful for the opportunity to go after another title," said Coach Ledford.

The Towns County Lady Indians are: seniors Taralee Arrowood, Cassandra Kelly, Jasmine Miranda, Lydia Moss, Hannah Martinez, Hayley Stowers, Hannah Whitehead, Sara Beth Hobbs, Kyra Tallent as Team Manager, and junior Taylor Cornett.

Once more, the girls will be fighting to defend their state championship title, which would give them their sixth straight win in the Top Spot in as many years.

"For both teams, the focus stays on competing at the highest level of possible performance, having a positive mental attitude, and enjoying each other in this closing season," said Coach Ledford. "We are go-

ing for one last run together with every last bit of effort, teamwork and determination we have."

Towns County High School Cross Country has 11 seniors on the boys and girls cross country teams. These students will be running their final races together as Indians and Lady Indians during the Nov. 4 State Championship.

NASCAR 2017

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

"Rowdy" Kyle Busch Gets Surprise Win

Martinsville, VA -- Kyle Busch was in the right places as the laps wound down on Sunday's 500-lap Cup Series race.

On the race's next to last restart, Chase Elliott was on the inside front row, while Brad Keselowski, the leader, chose to restart the race from the outside position. Denny Hamlin was third, and "Rowdy" Kyle was fourth. Keselowski barely got his No. 2 Ford ahead of Elliott on the restart. As the field entered turn-3, Elliott got under Keselowski, causing him to lose traction and go high.

Racing continued, with Elliott as the new leader. Hamlin got into Elliott's No. 24 Chevrolet half a lap later, sending him into the outside wall.

The incident brought out the race's last caution and called for a green-white-checkered finish.

Hamlin was the new leader. "Rowdy" was lined up on the outside of Hamlin.

It didn't matter that Kyle Busch and Denny Hamlin are both teammates at Joe Gibbs Racing, because each smelled a victory.

Hamlin got a good restart, but "Rowdy" caught him right after the white flag was given, signifying one lap to go. Busch put the nose of his No. 18 Toyota into the left-rear quarter panel of Hamlin's No. 11 and gave him a good shove. Hamlin went into the outside wall, while Busch outraced Martin Truex Jr. to the checkered flag and victory.

Busch took his victory lap but could not get back to the start-finish line because 17 cars had piled up, ran into each other, or wrecked just yards from the finish.

"It was a surprise win," said Busch. "But I can't tell you how we did it. We were just where we needed to be and had the car to win."

Truex was second, while Clint Bowyer came in third, and Keselowski, who won both stages of the race was fourth.

"Sometimes you think it's just racing, and at other times you don't know what to call it," said Keselowski. "I can't really say what happened there with Chase and I, but I know he got into me."

Kevin Harvick was fifth, followed by Trevor Bayne, Denny Hamlin, Ryan Blaney, Matt Kenseth, and Ricky Stenhouse Jr.

Chase Elliott wasn't too impressed with the move Hamlin put on his car, sending him into the wall and out of the race. He caught up with Hamlin on the victory lap and shoved his car into the wall.

Both drivers climbed out of their cars and greeted each other as is customary for rac-



"Rowdy" Kyle Busch gets surprise win

ers to do after an on-track incident.

"Yes, I got into the back of him (Elliott)," said Hamlin. "I was trying to get a race win. But somebody got into the back of me, too. I was just trying to move up."

Elliott led 123 laps and finished 27th, and didn't agree with Hamlin's version of what happened.

"I'm not alright with it," said Elliott. "It was not necessary. We got a good clean restart and I was doing what I needed to do. I think it was more than just hard racing."

The first 480 laps of the race was pretty mild for a Martinsville short track event. Things began popping on lap 487 after "Rowdy" Kyle got into the side of Joey Logano while trying to pass. The incident mashed the left rear quarter panel of Logano's No. 22 into the tire. Logano was forced to slow down and was rearended by Ryan Blaney. He spun bringing out the race's seventh caution. Logano was able to continue after his team pulled the fender out, and he finished 24th.

Top-8 Chase drivers: 1. Truex-4117, 2. Kyle Busch-4100, 3. Keselowski-4079, 4. Harvick-4053, 5. Johnson-4050, 6. Blaney-4047, 7. Hamlin-4045, 8. Elliott-4027.

There are three more races left in the 2017 Cup season. The field of eight drivers will have their points reset after the Nov. 12 race at Phoenix. The field will be reduced from eight to four drivers, who will battle it out in the race final at Homestead, Fla.

GRAGSON GETS FIRST TRUCK WIN

Noah Gragson won his first Truck Series race of his career this past Saturday at Martinsville. Matt Crafton was second, while Johnny Sauter, Harrison Burton, Todd Gilliland, Stewart Friesen, Kaz

Grala, Christopher Bell, Ben Rhodes, and Austin Cindric rounded out the top-10 finishers.

Top-6 drivers with three remaining races: 1. Bell-3083, 2. Sauter-3080, 3. Crafton-3068, 4. Rhodes-3049, 5. Cindric-3038, 6. John Nemechek-3021.

The driver points will be reset after the Nov. 10 Phoenix race, and only the top-4 will battle it out for the championship.

EIGHT DRIVERS REMAIN IN CHASE

With just three races remaining the Chase field is down to eight, which means the race for the championship is right around the corner.

With the playoff contenders trimmed down even more after the Kansas race, the odds for some drivers are looking better and better. Martin Truex Jr. is still in contention for a shot at his first title. Jimmie Johnson is one round away from competing for an unprecedented eighth. Johnson's team always seem to find a way to be there at the end.

But there are six other drivers who still have championship dreams of their own: Kyle Busch, Brad Keselowski, Kevin Harvick, Denny Hamlin, Ryan Blaney and Chase Elliott.

"The biggest thing we need to work on is short-run speed," Hamlin told reporters. "If we can do that, then we could contend. We're heading to a mighty good race track for us, and hopefully we'll be able to capitalize."

Kyle Busch won two races in the first round and again at Martinsville in the final two. He is locked into round four.

"We'll take what was given to us, and we'll live to see another day," Busch told reporters.

Ryan Blaney had a great run at Kansas. He started the day in 40th, and drove the

No. 21 Wood Brothers Ford to a third-place finish. Blaney has shown he is one of the top young talents in NASCAR.

Kevin Harvick started off the season with a strong showing, but his team has been wishy-washy. At times he's run great and at other times, by his own admission, "We've dropped the ball". He will need a much better effort if he is to make the final four-driver cut.

Brad Keselowski has three wins this season, but does self-defeating things on the track. He has the potential, but needs to keep a calm head.

After almost two years behind the wheel of the No. 24 Hendrick's Chevrolet, Chase Elliott is still looking for his first Cup win. He hasn't lived up to his own expectations, or those of his team.

Elliott has had plenty of opportunities to win a race by now. After all, he inherited the No. 24 team along with crew chief Alan Gustafson and all the resources that accompanied his promotion. He's finished second six times.

In all likelihood, Elliott will need to win, either at Texas or Phoenix if he is to make the final-4 cut.

The No. 42 team of Kyle Larson was knocked out of the Chase after an engine failure at Kansas. Just when the Chip Ganassi Racing Team seemed to get its foot in that door, fate dealt them the fatal blow. What seemed to be very realistic chances of Larson advancing into the final eight ended with a sudden burst of smoke and blown engine early on at Kansas. That left him in 39th place and hoping for something similar to happen to one of his competitors.

Weekend Racing: NASCAR will feature two nights and one day of racing this weekend at the 1.5-mile Texas Motor Speedway.

Fri., Nov. 3, Truck Series race 21 of 23; Starting time: 8:30 p.m. ET; TV: Fox Sports1.

Sat., Nov. 4, Xfinity Series race 31 of 33; Starting time: 8:30 p.m. ET; TV: NBCSN.

Sun., Nov. 5, Cup Series race 34 of 36; Starting time: 2 p.m. ET; TV: NBC.

Racing Trivia Question: How many Cup wins does Joey Logano have this season?

Last Week's Question: What year did NASCAR begin the Chase for the championship? Answer: It began with the 2004 season.

Gerald Hodges is a syndicated NASCAR writer and author. His books may be viewed and ordered online at Amazon.com. You may contact him by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com.



Cassandra Kelly 8th in Open/JV

Motorists urged to be cautious to avoid deer this fall

Watch out for deer on and near the roads! Motorists are urged to exercise caution during the fall as this is a time of peak deer activity, according to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division.

"Motorists should be alert and pay close attention to the roadsides as we are nearing the annual peak time of the year for deer-car collisions," said Charlie Killmaster, state deer biologist with DNR's Wildlife Resources Division. "Keep in mind that deer often travel in groups, so if a deer crosses the road ahead of you there is a good chance that another will follow. In many cases, that second deer is the one hit as the driver assumes the danger has passed and fails to slow down."

Following are some tips and information to help avoid potential collisions:

Deer Are Unpredictable: Always remember deer are wild and, therefore, can be unpredictable. A deer calmly standing on the side of a road may bolt into or across the road rather than away from it when startled by a vehicle.

One Deer Usually Means More: Always take caution and slow down when a deer crosses the road in front of you. Deer usually travel in groups, so it is likely that others will follow.

Time of Day: As deer are most active at dawn and dusk,

they are typically seen along roads during the early morning and late evening – the same times most people are commuting to and from work.

Time of Year: While deer-car collisions can occur at any time of year, the fall breeding season is a peak time for such accidents. During the fall breeding season, deer movement increases and this often brings them in contact with roadways that cross their natural habitats. Road shoulders generally provide beneficial food plants both during extremely dry times of the year and following a long, hard winter. Deer are attracted to these plants in late-winter, early spring and late summer. Georgia's new deer rut map (<http://georgiawildlife.com/rut-map>) is an excellent tool for motorists to determine local peaks in deer movement. Drivers should be especially wary of deer during these time periods.

Minimize Damage: If it is too late to avoid a collision, drivers are advised to slow down as much as possible to minimize damage – resist the urge to swerve to avoid the deer, as this may cause further damage, sending drivers off the road or causing a collision with another vehicle.

For more information on the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division, visit www.georgiawildlife.com.