

Towns County Sports

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Indians roll past Polk Co, fall short to Piedmont and Union at BOTS

By Jerry Kendall
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The Towns County Indians Varsity Basketball Team was in action three times last week when they hosted the twenty second annual Battle of the States Tournament.

They used a torrid scoring spree during all of the second and third quarters and into the fourth in taking an impressive victory over Polk County, Tennessee, in the second round on Tuesday.

The Indians were victimized, however, by less lengthy but potent scoring runs by Piedmont, Alabama, on Monday and Union County on Wednesday in losses to those squads even though they did rally for a brief lead against Union in a game in which the outcome was in doubt until the final minute of play.

Indians 58 Piedmont, AL 71

The Indians came face to face with the Piedmont, Alabama, Bulldogs in the opening game of the Battle of the States with the Bulldogs having been runnersup in not only last year's Battle of the States in Hayesville but also runnersup in Class AAA in the Alabama state tournament as well.

The Bulldogs lost to Madison Academy, a private school in metro Huntsville, in the state championship game but are now still celebrating a Class AAA State Championship this year in football, including a win over Madison Academy, with several of the football stars being top players on their basketball team.

As a matter of clarification, Alabama has numerous small community schools with Class AAA schools in that state being Class A size if in Georgia.

The Indians played well in last year's Battle of the States against Piedmont, trailing by just six points before the Bulldogs pulled away for a double digit victory with accurate free throw shooting the final minute and a half of that game.

And the Indians outplayed the Bulldogs for much of this year's game with a notable exception being an explosive 28-6 Bulldog run between the two and a half minutes mark of the second quarter and the two minutes mark of the third.

The Bulldogs scoring run reminds your reporter of a similar but even more potent 34-0 run the Indians hung on Cherokee County, Alabama, during an eventual Indians 55-41 win in the second round of the 1999 Battle

of the States. The quite good capabilities of the Cherokee County team were not only evident by the closeness of the score against the Indians in view of the long scoring run but by their defeating Hayesville by a 54-44 score the following day in the third round.

Of additional interest related to this game is the likelihood that current Piedmont head coach Tommy Lewis was the coach of his home town Cherokee County team in 1999.

But back to coverage of the game. There were two ties and three lead changes in less than six minutes at the start of the game with the Indians holding a 16-11 lead after one quarter.

Highlights of the quarter included two free throws by sophomore Zach Davenport providing a 2-2 tie, a trey by junior Will De Vries giving them a 5-4 lead, a putback basket by junior Adam Barret providing an 8-7 advantage, and a field goal by freshman Will Travis getting a 13-11 Towns lead.

Barrett and Major Moss led the Indians in scoring for the quarter with four points each.

The second quarter would see the Indians hold two additional five point leads of 18-13 and 20-15 before the Bulldogs rallied for a 23-20 lead by the mid point of the quarter.

Field goals by Moss and freshman Trent Bradshaw, who also scored the first basket and handed out assists on the Indians' other two baskets in the quarter, had the Indians within 23-22 and 25-24 by the 2:47 mark but the aforementioned potent scoring run by the Bulldogs was on the horizon.

The Bulldogs sank two field goals the final 2:28 of the second quarter for a 29-24 lead at intermission and sank five treys during a 24-6 start to the third quarter in racing out to a 53-30 lead by the 2:02 mark of the third quarter.

The Indians made a move themselves after that charge, however, closing the third quarter on a 9-0 run and opening the fourth with a 4-1 start in closing to within 54-43 by the 6:54 mark with Moss contributing six straight points, including a dunk, and Barrett the first two points on a putback basket and the final two of the run on two free throws.

The two teams would battle on nearly equal terms after that as five different Indians combined for fifteen points with Moss and Davenport leading with five and four respectively as Piedmont closed out a 71-58 victory. The Bulldogs would go on to fall by



Major Moss with a two-handed slam vs Piedmont. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

a 66-50 score to eventual tournament champion Lumpkin County in the second round but use a 25-12 fourth quarter to rally past Class AAA White County 71-65 for third place in the tournament.

White County had fallen in overtime to defending champion Hayesville in the second round 86-83 in one of two nail biter contests on the boys side with the other being a 46-43 Lumpkin win over Hayesville in the championship game.

Scoring leaders for the Indians against Piedmont were Moss with 18 points, Barrett with 12, De Vries with 10, Davenport with 8, and Bradshaw with 6 while Moss also led in assists with 4 and was followed by Davenport with 3 and Barrett and Bradshaw with 2 each.

Two Bulldog seniors and two juniors scored between 11 and 17 points in leading them to victory.

Indians 76 Polk County 54

The Polk County Wildcats fell to eventual tournament champion Lumpkin County by a 79-62 score in first round action and 61-53 to Hokes Bluff, Alabama, in the third round with the dominant Indians second round victory over the Cats coming between those two contests.

The Indians appeared to perhaps be taking control of the game against the Wildcats when

they used a 12-3 run highlighted by two fast break baskets by sophomore Cole Ledford in erasing an early 3-0 deficit and holding a 12-6 lead by the 2:43 mark of the first quarter.

The Wildcats would rally for a 12-12 tie by quarter's end only to see the Indians embark on the aforementioned lengthy scoring run at the start of the second quarter.

A Major Moss basket just eight seconds into the second quarter would give the Indians a 14-12 lead and send them off and running for a 40-24 lead at intermission which would become 53-28 by the end of the third quarter and 57-28 less than a minute into the fourth on the strength of an overall 45-16 run. Highlights of the run were numerous with De Vries contributing fourteen points in the second quarter and nineteen in the overall run and other leaders being Davenport with ten, Barrett with eight, and Moss with seven. The Wildcats would outscore the Indians 26-19 after that with seven different Indians putting points on the scoreboard in the quarter and ten of thirteen Indians seeing action entering the scoring column for the game.

De Vries led the Indians in scoring for the game with 23 points with other leaders being Moss with 16, Davenport with 14, and Barrett with 10 while Moss led in assists with 6 and was followed by Davenport

with 3.

Indians 49 Union County 59

With the Indians and the Union County Panthers both falling in their opening round games and victorious in the second round, the two rivals came face to face in the battle for fifth place in the tournament in the third round on Wednesday.

This was the third time for the two teams to face each other in December with the Panthers having taken a come from behind victory in their old gym in Blairsville and the Indians coming from behind for an overtime victory on their home court.

The Indians jumped out to an 8-2 lead by the 5:20 mark of the first quarter but the Panthers used a trey and a traditional three point play to advantage in taking a 14-12 lead by quarter's end with two field goals each by Adam Barrett and Will De Vries and a trey by Zach Davenport accounting for most of the Indian scoring.

The Indians were handicapped by the 4:26 mark of the first quarter with two key players having been charged with two fouls and resulting time on the bench, a pattern which would extend throughout the game with at least some thought present of soft touch fouls being included at times but with sometimes heavier contact not noted by the officials.

The Panthers had scored the final four points of the first quarter for their lead and they opened the second with a 12-0 run for a 26-12 lead and then a 28-14 advantage after two free throws by senior Jake Pyrlík before the Indians recovered for a strong second quarter finish.

They used a 13-6 run between the 4:38 and 4:6 seconds marks to pull within 34-27, only to see Union's all tournament selection, junior Lawson Baenninger take the ball coast to coast for a layup at the buzzer for a 36-27 Panther lead at intermission.

Four points each by Davenport on a deuce and two free throws and four for four free throw shooting by freshman Will Travis highlighted the Indian run.

The Indians continued their good work at the start of the third quarter with a 12-2 run, including a 10-0 finish to the run between the 6:16 and 3:35 marks after Davenport and the Panthers traded baskets.

Davenport and De Vries struck for deuces and sophomore Bradley Benson and De Vries treys for a sudden 39-38 Indian lead at that 3:35 mark and De Vr-

ies sank a trey after two Panther baskets for just a 42-41 Union lead entering the fourth quarter.

The Panthers got the first of two breaks on disputable kicked ball related events just half a minute into the fourth quarter, gaining possession on what seemed to be a clear but uncalled kicking violation by the Panthers and a resulting field goal for a 44-41 lead.

An old fashioned three point play by De Vries got the Indians even just half a minute later but the Panthers later had a 48-45 lead and went into a stall during the final couple of minutes of the game.

Davenport nearly came up with a steal near mid court but in a scramble on the floor, he was called for kicking the ball with De Vries in possession of the loose ball and the Indians with a chance to reduce the three point lead.

The Panthers got possession on the call near the minute and a half mark, however, and quickly scored at 1:24, giving them a 50-45 lead with the turn of events being especially frustrating for the Indians and their followers in view of the earlier missed call and a good chance that the contact with Davenport's foot was incidental instead of considered intentional as is a requirement for making this type call.

At any rate, they can't be faulted for their good fortune but the Panthers scored four of their eight points in the fourth quarter up to that point off possessions obtained by the kicked ball related call and non call, accounting for most of their five points lead at the time.

That would be the Panthers' last field goal but the lead proved to be too much for the Indians to overcome as the Panthers, to their credit, sank nine of twelve free throw attempts compared to two Indian field goals the final 1:03 of the game in clinching a 59-49 victory.

De Vries, who made the all tournament team, led the Indians in scoring for the game with 17 points with other scoring leaders being Davenport with 11, Barrett with 6, and Moss and Travis with 5 each while Moss led in assists with 7 and was followed by four teammates with one assist each according to your reporter's tally.

The mostly very young substitutes for the Indians are to be commended for very capable play during the tournament but especially during the Union game when the Indians faced more foul problems and lost playing time than in most games.

Baenninger led Union with 24 points and was followed by senior Chase Shook with 14.

Scoring woes costly for Lady Indians in Battle of the States losses

By Jerry Kendall
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The Towns County Lady Indians Varsity Basketball Team had a tough time at times putting the ball in the basket last week in the Battle of the States Tournament in the Towns County Gym and fell to defeat in all three games they played to Hayesville; Piedmont, Alabama; and Polk County, Tennessee.

The Lady Indians can't be faulted for their effort but the shots just wouldn't fall in the basket at a consistent enough rate to get them in the win column.

It actually wasn't just the Lady Indians who had periods of scoring difficulties as it was simply one of those years when most of the largely very young girls teams had scoring droughts of their own but usually countered by other periods of greater accuracy in entering the scoring column.

Lady Indians 30 Hayesville, NC 57

Against Hayesville in their opening Battle of the States game on Monday, the Lady Indians fell to a 12-1 deficit by the 1:35 mark of the first quarter but finished the quarter with the final four points on field goals by freshman Lea Neumyer and senior Jocelyn Byers for a 12-5 deficit by quarter's end.

The second quarter would see just four deuces by Hayesville and a deuce by Savannah Dyer and a trey by Madison Landress by the Lady Indians along with a significant number of trips to the foul line for both teams.

Unfortunately, the Lady Indians could not capitalize on opportunities to gain ground on the Lady Yellow Jackets at the foul line where they sank just two of thirteen attempts in the quarter and three of fifteen for the first half.



Sophomore guard Madison McClure drives to the hoop vs Hayesville on Monday. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

had great success in some games at the foul line this year such as going 33 for 54 at the line in an overtime home court loss to Social Circle and 22 for 34 in a one point win at Social Circle but unable to approach this success against Hayesville.

The Lady Jackets did just a bit better at the line in sinking five of ten attempts in the second quarter and six of fourteen for the half in holding a 25-12 lead at intermission.

The baskets by Dyer and Landress actually had the Lady Indians within 20-12 by the two minutes mark of the second quarter but the Lady Jackets scored the final five points of the quarter for the thirteen points lead.

Ten different Lady Indians entered the scoring column for the game with leaders being freshman Kristin Byers with 6 points and seniors Jocelyn Byers and Dyer with 5 each. Dyer and freshman Taylor Cornett each contributed 1 assist according to your reporter's tally.

Freshman Savannah Annis and junior Emory Patton led a balanced scoring attack for the Lady Jackets with 13 and 9 points respectively.

The Lady Jackets, who had won the previous two Battle of the States Tournaments, went on to reach the finals by defeating Lumpkin County 41-36 on Tuesday before falling by a 36-21 score to Hokes Bluff, Alabama, in the finals on Wednesday.

Lady Indians 32 Piedmont, AL 39

The Piedmont Lady Bulldogs had fallen to Lumpkin County on Monday in their

opening game by a 47-28 score, sending them into a consolation game against the Lady Indians on Tuesday. The game proved to be a real battle for nearly three quarters before the Lady Bulldogs pulled out to a pair of twelve point leads during an 11-2 run the final two minutes of the third quarter and just over four minutes at the start of the fourth and withstood a late lady Indian run in taking a 39-32 victory.

The first quarter was a real struggle for both teams as a trey by Jocelyn Byers at the 2:36 mark by Jocelyn an early deuce by the Lady Bulldogs for a 3-2 Lady Indian lead by quarter's end.

Two long deuces by Kristen Byers and a trey by sophomore Madison McClure provided a 7-2 Lady Indian run in barely more than a minute between the 5:57 and 4:52 marks of the second quarter for a 10-10 tie.

And Kristen Byers' third long deuce of the quarter and a Madison Landress free throw

at 2:32 gave the Lady Indians a 13-12 lead before the Lady Dogs finished with two free throws and a field goal for a 16-13 lead at halftime.

An early third quarter Piedmont basket had the Lady Dogs ahead 18-13 but Jocelyn Byers struck for treys at 6:57 and 6:13 for a 19-18 Towns lead before a 16-5 Piedmont run the final six minutes had them ahead 34-24 entering the fourth quarter.

Neither team would enter the scoring column for nearly three and a half minutes at the start of the fourth quarter with the Lady Dogs sinking a deuce at 4:38, giving them their first twelve points lead.

That basket was matched by two free throws by freshman Kenzlee Denton for a 36-26 score at 4:18.

And the Lady Indians responded to a Piedmont field goal and a 38-26 lead with six straight points, on two free throws by Madison Landress and long deuces by Kristin Byers and Landress, for just a 38-32 deficit with 1:03 left.

The Lady Indians would not score again, however, and the Lady Dogs would sink one of three free throw attempts the final thirty three seconds for the 39-32 win.

Scoring leaders for the Lady Indians were Kristen Byers with 10 points, Jocelyn Byers with 9, and Landress with 8 while Jocelyn Byers and McClure led five different Lady Indians in assists with 4 each.

Sophomore Kaitlyn Ridley and junior Jakieya Mitchell led Piedmont with 13 and 10 points respectively.

The Lady Dogs went on to fall to Union County by a 50-22 score in third round play on Wednesday.

Lady Indians 28 Polk County, TN 39

The Polk County Wildcats fell in their opening two Battle of the States games

by scores of just 36-33 to Class AAAA White County on Monday and 39-37 to Class AA Union County on Tuesday and they had their hands full with the Lady Indians for two and half quarts on Wednesday before pulling away the final quarter and a half for a 39-28 victory.

The Lady Indians got an early 5-0 lead on a three point play by Madison Landress and two free throws by Jocelyn Byers but the Wildkittens used an 18-4 run interrupted only by two field goals by Byers for an 18-9 lead after one quarter.

The Lady Indians would battle back in second quarter action, however, with Savannah Dyer leading six players entering the scoring column with four points as they used a 12-5 run for just a 23-21 deficit on two free throws by Landress near the half minute mark before a Wildkitten trey with four seconds left gave Polk a 28-23 lead at halftime.

The first half of the third quarter was a struggle for both teams with the Lady Indians edging to within 26-24 on a drive for two points by Byers and a free throw by Landress by the 4:20 mark but the Wildkittens used a 9-2 run the final 3:55 for a 35-26 lead entering the fourth quarter.

The Lady Indians were handicapped by an injury of hopefully short duration to the shooting hand of Byers, an all tournament selection for the second year in a row, for much of the fourth quarter as the Wildkittens held just a 4-2 advantage in the quarter in taking the 39-28 victory.

Byers and Landress tied for the scoring lead for the game with 9 points each and Byers contributed the only assist tallied by your reporter. Sophomore Niki Ball, the Wildkittens' all tournament selection, led her team in scoring with 15 points while fellow sophomore Skylar Hatcher added 13.