

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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

Towns County Wrestling has busy start to new year

By Joe Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County High School wrestling team has had a busy start in the New-Year with the Area Duals on Jan. 4 & 5, which we reported on earlier.

They then traveled to Robinsville, N.C. to challenge the Knights to a dual and although they wrestled well just couldn't put the points on the board for victory losing 58-16.

The next dual was on Jan. 11 in Hayesville, N.C. where they challenged the local rival Yellow Jackets and came home winners 40-28 in a hard fought dual and finally returning to their home mats to do battle with a tough White County team that won 54-21 in a dual that welcomed Rabun Gap who the Indians defeated 24-18.

"All in all we have wrestled pretty good so far this year. We have lost some team members for various reasons and have had to give up to many points to forfeit which is something I'd hope wouldn't happen this season. Sophomore Aaron Collier and Junior Vonya Baldwin are wrestling well and things look on track to do well individually. We are all making strides and I think we will be peaking at the right time," stated Head Coach Jeff Stowers.

The team traveled to Robinsville, N.C. on Jan. 7 to do battle with a solid Knights team, and although the Indian spirit was there, the points were not. Baldwin won by fall at 132 pounds to give the Indians 6 points, Junior Austin Stephens won by decision in the 160-pound class for 4 points and heavyweight Senior Wesley Bloodworth won by fall for another 6 points but it was too little to late as the Indians fell 58-16.



Towns County wrestling seniors and their families on Senior Night last week. Photo/Lowell Nicholson.

Their next dual found the Indians in Hayesville, N.C. to challenge the local rival and controlled the dual to the end with a 40-28 win. It was a solid performance by the Indians with Collier keeping up his great year with a win by fall for 6 points at 120 pounds. Junior Christoph Nguyen won by fall in the 126-pound class, Baldwin won another match by fall in the 132-pound class for 6 points, Stephens won again by technical fall for 5 points in the 152-pound class, Senior Tyler Hoffman won by fall in the 170-pound class for 6 points, Sophomore Kyle Davis won by fall in the 182-pound class for 6 points and Senior Bradley Smith won by fall in the 195-pound class for the final 6 points of the dual.

Jan. 15 found the team home on their own mats to claim a win against Union County 49-30, Rabun Gap 24-18 and a hard

fought loss to a really solid White County team 54-21.

"White County has a really strong team," complimented Stowers while discussing the loss but not making any excuses.

"We have lost some team members and it really hurts us as a team in these duals. I hate it for the guys that are left because we have worked hard preparing for the season and when you loose members late like this it just hurts everybody on the team."

Against White County, Collier had another win by fall in the 120-pound class to elevate himself to one of the premier wrestlers in the Area, Baldwin had another fine match in the 132-pound class which he won by fall to elevate his status as one of the premier wrestlers in the Area. Junior Christian Davis won by fall in the 138-pound class and Kyle Davis had another great match and won by decision

in the 182-pound class.

"The team just had to give up to many points by forfeit to have a chance of winning outright but stood a chance outside of those forfeits," declared Stowers.

The next match of the night saw the Indians win in a close one against neighboring Union County and although it was very close, the tribe prevailed again thanks to some more solid wrestling by Collier, Davis, Smith and Hoffman. Nugyen won by forfeit in the 120-pound class for 6 points to get the match started followed by Collier who won by technical fall in the 128-pound class for 5 points. He typically wrestles in the 120-pound class. Baldwin had another solid match that he won by technical fall for 5 points. Hoffman was solid again and won by fall in the 170-pound class for 6 points. Smith wrestled hard and won by fall in the 220-pound class. In the 106-pound class, Sophomore Anna Sutton won by forfeit for 6 points and Mercer won by fall in the 113-pound class to give the Indians the victory by one point.

The tribe put it on Rabun Gap despite the forfeits and again Collier and Baldwin were solid winning their respective matches in the 120 and 132 classes for 6 points each. Carson Mercer won by fall in the 113-pound class for 6 points and Christian Davis won by fall in the 138-pound class to give the Indians the victory in another close one 24-18.

The guys are getting ready for the individual state bouts and are looking very solid in the team members who remain. The school honored the seniors on this night by recognizing Tyler Hoffman, Bradley Smith, Cory Griffin and team manager, who they couldn't do without, Alex Fagin. It was a special night for some special athletes who deserve the honors they received.

Lady Indian JV wins fourth in a row vs George Walton

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Lady Indian JV's Basketball Team used second and fourth quarter scoring surges in winning their fourth straight game last Tuesday when they played host to the George Walton Lady Bulldogs in their only game of the week.

Their play in this game may have been their best against a competitive opponent this year. The victory gives them a 6-5 record after a 2-5 start.

The first quarter was a real battle as there were four lead changes and a 7-7 tie by quarter's end with a field goal by Savannah Dyer giving the Lady Indians a 2-0 lead, two free throws by Jocelyn Byers a 4-3 lead, and a trey by Brooke Smith a 7-5 advantage. The second quarter belonged to the Lady Indians as Byers struck for treys at the 6:00 and 5:05 marks for a 13-7 Towns lead and she then matched a George Walton trey with her third of the quarter at 3:37 for a 16-10 lead which became 23-10 at halftime with Smith contributing four of the final seven Towns points in the quarter.

The Lady Indians seemed to be in control of the game with a 27-15 lead by the 2:53 mark of the third quarter but the Lady Bulldogs struck for the final



Towns' JV during its win over George Walton. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

eight points in reducing the Lady Indians' lead to 27-23 by quarter's end. The Lady Indians regained control of the game in the fourth quarter as Smith drove baseline for two points, Byers wrapped two more treys at the 5:56 and 3:13 marks around a Lady Bulldogs free throw and an Alyssa Pyle pull up jumper for a 37-24 Towns lead. Byers later added a drive for two for an eight points quarter and an eventual 40-29 Lady Indians victory.

Byers took scoring honors with 19 points with Smith taking second honors with 10 while Pyle led in assists with 3.

Close friends but fierce competitors

By Jerry Kendall
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Last week's games between the Lady Indians and George Walton Academy and Hebron Christian Academy brought Lady Indians Eryn Cochran and Stephanie Patton face to face in fierce competition against three close friends and teammates, Ivy Atkism and Ann Craven of George Walton and Amber Skidgel of Hebron Christian.

The four play travel ball together during the off season for the Georgia Metros, who are coached by Steve Patton,

Stephanie's father. Atkism and Skidgel are, no doubt, referred to as the "big girl" for their respective teams by opposing teams as both stand six feet or taller and are further considered the best players on their teams. Another Lady Indians opponent who is a travel ball teammate of these five is Amanda Thompson, a top flight player for the Hayesville Lady Yellow Jackets.

All six mentioned players will be around for awhile for their respective high school teams as Atkism, Cochran, and Craven are just juniors while Patton, Skidgel, and Thompson are only sophomores.

Seventh Grade boys basketball falls to Wilbanks

By Joe Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Middle School boy's basketball team fell to the Wilbanks Patriots 59-56 in the first round of the league championship tournament Tuesday at Lumpkin County Middle School.

It was a very exciting game that saw the tribe come from behind and out-score Wilbanks by 19 points in the third quarter but eventually fall as time ran out. "We played hard and got ourselves back into the game late in the third quarter but we simply ran out of time in the final seconds of the game. I feel bad for the guys but they can hold their heads high because of the effort they put forth tonight," stated Head Coach Duncan Weekley.

The game was close early as the Indians drew first blood but a hot 3-point shooter for the Patriots hit three goals in early to secure a 17-14 lead going into the second quarter. His hand remained hot and the Indians went cold in the paint rebounding and scoring as they allowed the Patriots to outscore them by 12 points in the second quarter and trailed 37-22 at the half way point.



Towns County's 7th grade squad during a timeout during last week's playoffs at Lumpkin County. Photo/Joe Collins.

Weekley took the Indians into the locker room at the half and somehow got their attention as they came out for the second half loaded for bear. An early basket by Wilbanks increased their lead by 17 points but did not curb the desire for victory in the Indians.

Weekley had his team get aggressive early in the third quarter by going to a man-to-man full court press. Cole Ledford, Zack Davenport and Cason Shook got busy and with some great hustle causing 11 turnovers in the backcourt that resulted in the Indians outscoring the Patriots by 19 points to take a 44-40 lead into the final

seven minutes of the game. It was very exciting to see the guys put the blitz on Wilbanks and take the lead after trailing by 17 points.

The fourth quarter was back and forth until the final 3:12 when Davenport hit a 3-point goal and Ledford made two crucial lay-ups to put the Indians in the lead 53-52 with 2:42 left in the game. Ledford then hit a free throw to increase the Indians lead 54-52. The Patriots tied the game 54-54 with 1:32 left when Evan Berrong found Davenport open on an inbound give and go to give the Indians the lead again 56-54. Wilbanks answered with

a goal and a final basket with .40 left to take the lead 59-56. That was all it took to claim the victory over the Indians 59-56 as time ran out on a solid Indian charge.

It was an impressive display of the talent this team has as Ledford led his team in scoring with 21 points to complement his 6 steals, 3 assists and 4 rebounds. His overall hustle and determination was evident in his contributions to the last half surge. Davenport had another solid performance with 12 points, 3 assists, 7 steals and 6 rebounds while Berrong remained strong on the boards with 10 rebounds to go with his 10 points. Trent Bradshaw hit two early goals for 6 of his 15 points as Chase Williams added 3 boards and two steals. Shook's contributions can't be overlooked as he harassed the Wilbanks ball handlers causing several turnovers. He ended with two steals, one assist and 3 rebounds.

The loss ended the seventh grades first year of organized school ball and everyone involved admits that this was a beneficial program for the athletes and the school.

Way to go seventh grade Indians this was a remarkable season you should be proud of.

NASCAR 2013

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter
Daytona 500 winner among "Movers"

Many Cup teams return with lineups intact from 2012.

Eleven of the 12 drivers who qualified for last year's Cup Chase are with the same team this season. The notable exception is reigning Daytona 500 champion Matt Kenseth, who moved to the No. 20 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota. Kenseth's speeds during last week's Preseason Thunder at Daytona suggest last year's Daytona and Talladega winner will be equally competitive for JGR as he was for Roush Fenway Racing on the schedule's biggest tracks.

RFR will have a Sunoco Rookie of the Year contender at the wheel of the vacated No. 17 Ford. Two-time NASCAR Nationwide Series champion Ricky Stenhouse Jr. moves to NASCAR's premier series in 2013.

Joey Logano is now a member of the championship team of Penske Racing and will compete alongside reigning Cup champion Brad Keselowski in the No. 22 Ford. Penske Racing resumes its relationship with Ford in 2013 after a 10-season run with Dodge.

Danica Patrick begins her first full NASCAR Sprint Cup campaign at Daytona in the No. 10 Stewart-Haas Racing Chevrolet. Patrick, a Sunoco Rookie of

the Year contender, posted her best series finish - 17th - in her final 2012 start at Phoenix.

Speedweeks begin with the non-points Sprint Unlimited for 2012 Coors Light Pole winners and past event winners at 8 p.m. EDT Saturday, Feb. 16. The 55th Daytona 500 follows at 1 p.m. ET Sunday Feb. 24.

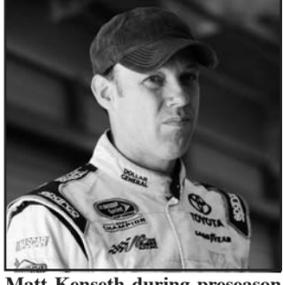
IS THE NUMBER 3 ABOUT TO RETURN

Richard Childress told reporters last week at Daytona that his grandson, Austin Dillon plans to run several Cup races this year in preparation for a full 2014 season.

"We don't know how many Cup races he'll run because so much depends on sponsorship," Childress said. "Since the old rule about seven races ruining your rookie status is gone, we might run him more than that. And that goes for Ty, too. [Ty Dillon, Austin's younger brother, will run his second full season in the Camping World Truck Series before going to Nationwide in 2014.]

"We're going to give them both some Cup races this year."

With Dillon still registered as a Nationwide driver, he can run unlimited Cup races without jeopardizing his rookie status. (That's why Danica Patrick, who ran 10



Matt Kenseth during preseason practice

remains eligible for the Cup Rookie of the Year awards this year). Dillon plans to run some Cup races for Circle Sports and will get some starts for James Finch at Phoenix Racing. Childress hasn't said so publicly, but insiders say he's been thinking seriously about giving Austin the iconic, No. 3 for this year's Cup races. Nobody has carried that number in Cup since RCR star Dale Earnhardt died on the last lap of the 2001 Daytona 500.

I WON'T BE GOING TO EUROPE

According to a story in Autoweek, NASCAR is considering hosting exhibition races in Europe.

If they are successful, I won't be covering them.

While a European series might help widen NASCAR's reach through television, overseas races have only benefited the sanctioning organization.

"NASCAR would consider future exhibition race opportunities in Europe as part of a broader strategy of promoting stock-car racing in a region and supporting existing efforts like our Euro Racecar NASCAR Touring Series, which is about to embark on its second season," NASCAR vice-president George Silberman told Autoweek.

"NASCAR's philosophy has evolved over the years, from the NASCAR exhibition race model of the 1990s -- when we ran several races in Japan -- to the more recent model we implemented beginning with Mexico."

Hosting international NASCAR races is not a new idea. Long before the exhibition races of the 1990s, NASCAR raced in Europe under the stewardship of its co-founder, Bill France Sr. In 1955, seven years after the first NASCAR race, France arranged for several stock cars, known as the "White Ghosts," to be transported to Europe where they raced in existing events to help promote interest in the sport. It may not be long before history repeats itself.

The series has traveled to Australia once, Japan three times, as well as Mexico and Canada. During the three-race series held in Japan in 1996, '97, and '98, teams loaded their car and all racing equipment into a 40' shipping container and paid the shipping charges to Long Beach, California. Honda Motor Company took care of the ocean crossing to Japan.

MUSA Spring Registration

The Mountain United Soccer Association is ready for Spring Soccer. Registrations are now being accepted. Registration forms will be mailed to past registered players. You can also get forms at www.mountainsoccer.org.

The Fall 2012 season was a big success. Younger teams played in Blairsville, Hiawassee, and Blue Ridge. The older age groups competed throughout Georgia.

In Blairsville, Cott Beverage is our community host for the soccer fields. In Hiawassee, the fairgrounds through the recreation department have been the host. The league is grateful for their commitment and support for

the youth in our communities.

The Spring season will begin in April. Anyone who is interested in playing needs to get a registration form in as soon as possible, in some cases space is limited.

The league is a volunteer run organization and is also a 501C3 non profit. Any and all donations are directed to the youth player to make it possible. Field Sponsors, Sign Sponsors, and Team Sponsors are always needed. If you are interested in being a sponsor, please contact the Association.

For more information contact the league at 706-835-1077 or www.mountainsoccer.org.

Only about a quarter of the Cup drivers attended those three exhibition races. There was no benefit to sponsors if they did not have connections or sales outlets in Japan. Most drivers came from NASCAR's lesser series, the Busch (now Nationwide), Trucks, and even the Winston West (a regional touring series on the west coast).

The first two races were held on a road course south of Tokyo and the atmosphere and surroundings were pleasant. Rusty Wallace won the first race, which was attended by about 15,000 fans, and Mike Skinner won the second, which had about the same number of fans.

The third and last race was held at a one and one-half mile oval, 90 miles north of Tokyo, called Twin-Ring Motegi. It was a desolate place, out in the middle of nowhere. There was one building, a large hotel, where the Cup drivers and officials were housed.

Can you imagine being stuck in a remote area, four days, with no car (NASCAR told teams and drivers they should not attempt to drive in Japan, because they drive on the opposite side of the road from us). Even if teams could have rented a limousine, there was no place to go and nothing to see, it was the dead of winter.

"I do not understand why NASCAR would bring us over here," said Bill Elliott. "This has got to be the most awful place I've ever raced at. I'm not having a bit of fun."

The lesser known drivers, along with their personnel, and journalists were bussed to and from hotels by shuttle busses as far as 60 miles away. That distance might not sound like much in the U. S., but in Japan, with its narrow, two-lane winding road, the bus I rode averaged about 20 miles per hour. If you missed your bus you

waited until the next day.

Mike Skinner won the third race, which was only viewed by about 10,000 fans. NASCAR had arranged for a bus to take some drivers and journalists to Narita Airport in Tokyo after the race, so they could take an early flight home.

It took five hours for the bus to make the 90-mile trip to the airport.

"Hurry, your plane is about to leave," shouted an airport flight attendant.

Michael Waltrip and I were both booked on the same flight. We made it, but had to sprint about 200 yards. They closed the door behind Michael. Several other people didn't make it.

Based on my experience with NASCAR in Japan and Mexico, someone is going to have to explain to me how racing in Europe will benefit American fans and drivers.

I've been there, done that, and I just don't get it.

I must add: All the Japanese people I came in contact with during my three visits were cordial and as friendly as the cultural differences between us would allow. Several went to great lengths trying to overcome the language barrier, in order to communicate.

Racing Trivia Question: How long (number of laps) is the Daytona 500?

Last Week's Question: Did Junior Johnson ever drive an Indy-car? **Answer:** In 1963 Johnson practiced in a Kurtis-Offenhauser, but after the second practice, he climbed out of the car and said, "I don't feel comfortable in it." That was his one and only attempt to drive an Indy-car.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at hodges@race500.com. NTUm23C1Dac