

Towns County Sports

Towns County's Leader In Sports

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Baldwin's 2nd Place finish leads Towns at KOM

By Todd Forrest
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The 2012 edition of Towns County's King of the Mountain Wrestling Tournament is in the books.

The Indians finished in 9th place with a total of 110 points. Vonya Baldwin took silver in the 132-pound weight class with a 3-1 record. Baldwin fell to Dawson County's Cory Jenkins in the finals. However, Baldwin knocked off White County's Caleb Cooper in the Semi-Finals.

Towns' Austin Stephens came in sixth place in the 160-pound weight class with a 3-3 record. Stephens defeated Riverside's Alex Baker and Madison County's Zack Kerns and Cherokee NC's Levi Swearingin.

Tyler Hoffman took home

the bronze in the 170-pound weight class. Hoffman defeated Allen Fuller of Social Circle to pick up the third place medal after knocking off Mickey Moran from Washington-Wilkes.

In the 182-pound division, Kyle Davis finished in fifth place with a 3-2 record. Davis knocked off Social Circle's Levi Manns in the consolation bracket. He would also defeat Madison County's Randy Whitley, and Union County's Michael Bailey to reach the final match of the bracket.

Wesley Bloodworth brought home a fourth place finish in the 285-pound weight class. The senior finished with a 4-2 record with wins over White County's Ty Anderson, Banks County's Logan Free, Smoky Mountain NC's Tony Clonch, and Madison County's Montega Maddox.

Banks County left with the first place hardware with 10 wrestlers placing inside the Top



Vonya Baldwin finished 2nd in the 132-pound weight class at KOM. North Hall, Dawson County, Pickens County, and Cherokee, NC rounded out the Top 5.

Indians Head Coach Jeff Stowers was pleased with his team's effort given the circumstances. The tournament was the first time all season that the Indians have been a united force.

"We've dealt with a lot

early in the season, injuries, illness, that sort of thing," Stowers said. "I think we battled good, didn't just lay down and quit when the opportunity was there."

"Everybody fought through to finish as high as they could," he said. "I couldn't ask for more."

Towns' YFL Banquet celebrates record season

By Joe Collins
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The 2012 YFL season was one that will go down in the record books as being one of, and maybe the best, seasons in the league's history.

It is a deserving bunch of boys that need to be recognized for all their hard work this year and Director Jimmy Smith made it happen Friday night at the Towns County High School cafeteria. More than one hundred kids came together to feast on hot dogs and barbecue sandwiches with all the fixings. Mothers even brought homemade desserts and that was "the icing on the cake" for all the little ones who were celebrating their season long achievements.

"We just wanted to tell all the volunteers, parents, coaches and most of all the players, thank you for all that was done this year to make the season a success. It is hard to put into words how much I appreciate what everybody has done," said a humble Smith as he started the presentation.

He thanked all the major players either who contributed through effort or through finances. "There are a lot of people who donated their time and/or resources to our program but two people who really come to mind when I think about how fortunate we are in our volunteer program is Towns



Towns County YFL Director Jimmy Smith addresses the crowd at the TC YFL Banquet. Photo/Joe Collins

County's Head Football Coach, Kyle Langford. He spends a lot of time with the kids and we want him to know that it means something to these kids and us when the high school football coach will come and help teach solid football fundamentals to a bunch of kids. It really does and we thank him for it. The other person is Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall. I can tell you right now that this season would not have happened without his help and we really thank him for his support," stated a humble Smith.

Smith then proceeded on to the awards presentation and the kids started getting loud. They could see their trophies shining in the light just behind the podium and they were ready.

"I want to first recognize the North Georgia Youth Foot-

ball League 9 year old Champions for their season and present them with this trophy that will be placed in the elementary school." All the Pee-Wee team and their coaches took the stage and you could see the pride in their faces as they examined their new trophy.

Smith then invited the Head Coach from each team to come and present the participation certificates and to give each athlete a trophy. He also praised the cheerleaders and their coaches and asked them to come up and receive an award for their season. Over one hundred trophies were handed out, as Smith made sure the cheerleaders knew that their hard work was very much appreciated.

And the fastest little man in Towns County was recognized for his record-breaking season. Braylen Rader was

presented with the award for most touchdowns in a single season as he rushed for 30 TD's in 2012.

"I want everybody to know how proud I am of these two guys and for all our players. There was so much talent on all the teams this year. It was the first season in the history of the Towns County youth football that all three teams were in the playoffs," praised Smith as he closed the ceremonies by thanking Dollar General of Hiawassee, Foodland of Blairsville and Ingles of Hiawassee for their much-needed contributions.

"I want to thank one more person before the night is through and that is Virginia Palmer who donates all the propane we use to cook food for the concession stand. She does it every year and I just wanted to say thank you," said Smith.

It was an awesome year for Towns youth football.

Out of 16 teams in the league, only two counties put all three teams in the playoffs and Towns was one of those two. This program is strong and it benefits the kids of our communities. Make plans now to sign your children up to be a part of this program for next year. It is a fact that kids who participate in school athletics are less likely to use drugs or get into trouble. They are better students and use their athletic training to become better people. Sports help kids along the path of life and we could all use a little of that.

Joe Collins



Tips from the Range

There is a split second of action that determines how your shot will turn out and that action is at the very top of the swing when the arms start their initial move down. This is the primary area that will allow the club to start on the proper path back to the ball, and if it isn't smooth and solid, the club head will be wrong at impact. It is vital that you allow the club to "fall" out of the top. Don't influence the initial drop with the hands in any way or you will create a bad path for the arms to follow. This is the most consistent flaw I see in amateurs and many don't even realize they are doing it. The top has to be correct to produce good shots consistently.

When we talk about the action we have out of the top of our swing, the one word that should come to mind is smooth. If you look at the great Tom Watson's swing you will notice that he starts his downswing before the arms finish their arc to the top. In other words, his weight transfer is headed toward his left side before the completion of the backswing. This movement makes his downswing very smooth because it allows his lower body to start the move to impact. Remember, this move to the front foot leads the weight transfer on the downswing and that is the key to swinging smoothly.

There are two major reasons why the "move from the top" can get fouled up and the first is BALANCE! How many times have we talked about balance as a key to the proper swing? If the core of the swing tilts, then the club will follow a very negative path and you will not like the outcome. Typically it will be a pull. You need to feel as though you are leaning away and behind the ball at impact and that will guarantee your arms extend. This will also allow your lower body to begin the downswing.

You must not do anything with your hands as the club starts its path to impact. If you are out of balance at the top, then you will need to cast your hands first to help reestablish your center of gravity on the downswing. This early release of the hands will also make you open your shoulders to soon, so make sure you are in a good balanced position throughout the whole of your stance and swing.

There is an interesting point that I would like to emphasize while talking about balance and the start of your downswing. Your arms weigh approximately ten pounds each. When you

start your backswing, you will be swinging twenty pounds of active weight in motion to the top and then returning it to impact. That alone will pull you to your toes during the swing, and once you are on your toes, you will have to re-adjust your balance and WHAM, that rocking of the weight has made your swing bad out of the top and your shot is over, start cussing cause most likely, "it ain't gonna' be pretty." You must stay in balance throughout the whole of the swing and not just at address. Most often times when you see a tour pro hit a shot offline, it was because his/her balance was bad. It is one of the biggest things they work on when looking at fundamental issues.

The second most popular error that affects the start of the downswing is the need to "hit" the ball instead of trusting the swing to do the work for us. This overwhelming desire to hit it hard is a good attribute but it has its place and time during the swing. It is natural for us to try and manipulate the speed of the club with our smaller muscles like those found in the hands and wrist because it feels better. The actual nerve endings are closer to the surface of our skin in those areas and give us direct feedback much quicker than the feelings we get from the bigger muscles. But, it is the larger muscle group that we must engage to achieve the best results and greatest distance. I have always said that with proper accuracy will come proper distance. The two go hand in hand when swinging correctly. This is why the pros can hit those long drives into really narrow fairways.

To avoid this error, you must simply be in balance and let the body swing the club. Keep your grip pressure firm but don't squeeze the grip and allow the big muscles to control the action. Your hands and arms are along for the ride until just before impact when the lower hand can pour on the power. This will happen naturally if the weight transfer is correct and your head is behind impact.

The great Ben Hogan said, "I hit the ball as hard as I can with my right hand but this action must wait until the club has left the top." Focus on how the club leaves the top of the swing and you will begin to see that the club will work for you and not against you. Clubs are designed to be swung hard, but do it in the correct sequence: Upper body first on the backswing and lower body first on the downswing. Let the hands play catch-up on the downswing and watch your shots improve.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

2012 Towns County Fall Athletic Banquet held at the Ridges

By Joe Collins
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Towns County High School held its 2012 Fall Athletic Banquet last Thursday night at the Oaks Restaurant at the Ridges.

The school administration hosted the banquet to honor the athletes who participated in the fall sports of; football, women's softball, women's and men's cross country and cheerleading.

The athletes and their families enjoyed a nice dinner of homemade chili and baked potatoes with salad and apple cobbler. Keynote speaker Rick Robinson, Head Baseball Coach for Young Harris College, then treated the audience to a great presentation. Following his speech, the athletes were given participation certificates and several seniors were recognized for their contributions on and off the field. It was grand night for a group of great student athletes.

Athletic Director Jonathan Gibson was master of ceremonies as he opened the banquet by inviting Assistant Football Coach Pete Boyd to offer the invocation and then introduced Robinson to the audience as the keynote speaker. Robinson spoke highly of TCHS' athletic program and of the success that the fall teams had achieved.

He also recognized the State Public Champion Cross Country ladies team and said, "For years as a player and a coach I dreamed and worked hard for a State title, and for your cross country varsity girls to win this title is unbelievable. It is a fitting reward for all the years of hard work they have



Members of the Towns County High School State Champion Cross Country team at TCHS Fall Banquet. Photo/Lowell Nicholson.

endured. I have a lot of pride in them as individuals and as a team. I know how hard it is to win and they have now received their just reward."

Robinson went on to enlighten the crowd with his experiences in sports and to relate to the athletes the meaning of what it is to be a winner.

"Champions are not always winners and winners are not always champions. Being a winner is a way of life and it comes from who you are. A winner always works to be the best person he/she can be and it shows in how they live. A winner puts God first and that is important," stated a concerned Robinson. He also went on to say, "You really need to learn how to get along with your parents because outside of God, nobody will ever love you more. Be thankful for their sacrifices for you and your participation in sports."

The high school cheerleading squad was first to be recognized by Gibson as he

invited coaches Rachael Pietz and Shelli Capehart to introduce the squad members. All the team was given certificates and a special recognition went to seniors Kayla Olin and Autumn Ledford. "I asked these girls to be leaders on the squad this year and they answered the call and helped with the younger girls to make sure we had a great year and I can't thank them enough," stated a proud Pietz as she honored the squad and the two seniors.

Gibson then introduced Cross Country coach Jeannie Ledford and jokingly stated, "Now coach I have my stopwatch on and you only have two minutes to speak and if you go over that then we will just have to adjust next year." Ledford responded by letting Gibson know that she could talk as fast as her feet could move. It was a reflection of how tight the TCHS administration is and how they feel about each other in their sports programs.

Ledford went on to intro-

duce her boys team and started off by saying, "My guys were just as much a part of what the girls did as anyone on either team. We are all one big family and I want them to know that." The men's team was introduced and each received a participation certificate with a special honor to the seniors Tyler Hoffman, Bradley Smith, Dillon Thompson and Ryan Tallent. Smith was singled out by Ledford for his great year and recognized for his accomplishments at the Area and State competitions where he finished third and seventh respectively.

Ledford was at a loss for words as she introduced the 2012 State Public Champion Girls Cross Country team and the individual State Champion, Ansley Vardeman. "There are not enough words to use to describe how proud I am of this team and of Ansley. They have worked so hard and I want them to know I appreciate everything they have accomplished this year. I always told them to stay humble and let your performance speak and that is what they did and I am so proud of all of them both boys and girls. They are my family."

There are no seniors on the girl's varsity team this year so next year will see the whole team coming back as veterans and hopefully dominating again.

Head Football Coach Kyle Langford was next and he opened his remarks by praising his players, "These are my kinda' guys cause they work hard and they never quit. They never quit on me and they have never quit on life and that will bode them well in the future. I enjoyed working with them as they have represented TCHS well on and off the field. It has been my pleasure coach them this year."

The players were all introduced and given participation certificates with three special awards being given to seniors Joseph Foster, Joseph Gibson and Wesley Bloodworth for their contributions to the team and the overall program throughout their careers and the 2012 season. Langford then recognized managers Kayla Nicholson, Allison Paige and Elizabeth Turner for their dedication to the team and for all their hard work.

"It's a dirty, thankless job and we just want them to know we appreciate what they do."

Head Softball Coach Tonya Martin was next and she introduced her team with grace and humility. She is a soft-spoken person but a well heard coach as her record proves her ability. She led the 2012 lady Indians softball team to the best ever finish in the history of the school and that is a testament to the teams talent this year. "I was very fortunate to inherit some very talented girls for my first year as the TCHS softball coach. I talked with my seniors at the first of the season and told them that we are all in this together and that is how it went. They became leaders and we ended up having a great season," declared a humble Martin. The players were introduced and each girl received a participation certificate for the 2012 season.

The team will miss graduating seniors Emily Anderson, who was named All Area second team and tied the season home run record with five. Brittany Boyer, Alex Fagen, Brittany Ledford and Meagan Ellis both of who received an honorable mention All Area team and Claire Wilson, who was named first team All Area for 2012 and also tied the season home run record

with five. Sophomore Tori Morgan was also recognized for receiving an honorable mention for the All Area team and she was recognized for her accomplishments as well.

Gibson then began the close of the banquet by honoring Don Hogsed for his field maintenance and to bus driver Scott Hamilton for all his dedication. He then invited TCHS Principal Roy Perren to address the athletes and Perren proudly stated how much the success of this year's teams means to the school and to the community. He also hoisted the State Championship Cross Country trophy and said, "We are really proud of all our teams but we know this trophy means a lot to many people and we thank our girl's varsity cross country team for bringing TCHS its first State title since the 1988 baseball team. We will unveil the Championship banner at a home basketball game and it will hang in our gym as a reminder of what this team has done. Congratulations to all the teams of TCHS fall sports."

Towns County School Superintendent Melissa Williams closed the banquet by stating how proud she was of the success of this years fall sports program. She elaborated, "I am very proud to be a part of this school system. It is enjoyable to work with the fine coaches we have and I feel really blessed to be a part of such a great program. Thank you for all your hard work and the effort it takes to make it all happen."

It was a humble ending to such a dynamic banquet. Thanks TCHS athletes for all you have done this year to make TCHS a better place for athletics.