

# Mountain Gymnastics Center holds practice meet; season begins in January



Level 1: (Top) left to right: Molly Williams, Zady Ludlum, Lola Hunter. (Bottom) Kennedy Mason, Avery Frechette



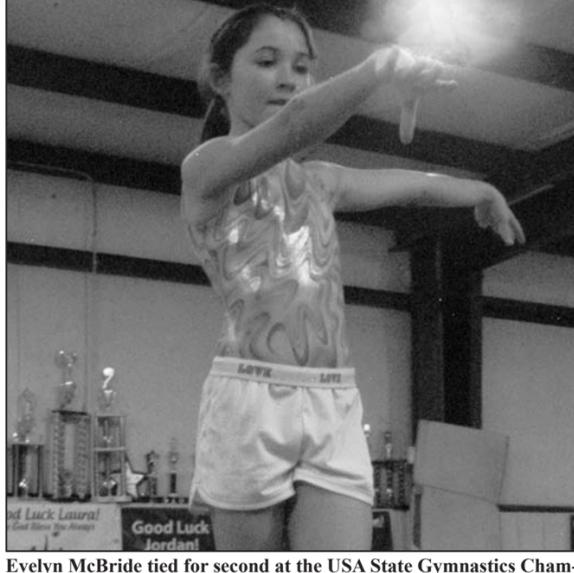
Level 3: (Top) left to right: Jacey Lee, Caymin Thompson, Annalyse Kiernan. (Bottom) Sofia Swartz, Chloe Truex, Jordan Swanson



Prep Beginner: (Top) left to right: Ella Dangler, Brandy Barlow. (Bottom) Hannah Currie, Kaitlynn Tant



Level 2: (Top) left to right: Rose Huff, Josie Poston, Anna Marie Kaylor. (Bottom) Ella Matteson, Madison Pelfrey, Ariel McCarter



Evelyn McBride tied for second at the USA State Gymnastics Championships. Not pictured is Reagan Ledford who also qualified for State during the fall and placed sixth on the bars in Level 4.

## Bowlers roll perfect game



Ray Everett



Jim McCrary

This December, Galaxy Bowling had two bowlers roll 12 strikes in a row for a perfect score of 300. These bowlers were Ray Everett on Thursday Night Fun Mix league (12/05) and Jim McCrary during Monday Night Men's league (12/09). This is such an amazing accomplishment for these two bowlers as well as a great way to wrap up the first half of winter leagues. The second half of the season will be starting soon and we hope to see many more high scores in the New Year.

## Bowling scores

Monday Night Ladies: Nell Rice 201, Joyce Trenton 202, Shae Roberts 237.

Monday Night Men: Mike Brandenburg 204, Larry Canaan 234, DeJay DeJoseph 222, Ken Sampson 222, Taz Matetzsch 213, 206, 204, BJ Gilbert 260, 205, Mike Davis 223, 235, Dave Davis 245, 228, Jim McCreary 300, 228, 223, Series 751, Gary Brown 210, 218, Curtis Corn 204, 216, Kevin Mohan 241, Richard Tanner 222, 210, Austin Hedden 203, 245, 203, Joe Teague 204, 202, Ryan Deaton 216,

249, 213, Bill Cox 213, Josh Mathis 220, 224, 201, Russ Southcott 279, 221.

Young At Heart: Ernest Rice 244, Nell Rice 202, Ken Thigpen 204, Ron Gaucher 205, Del Neiffer 224, Pat Smith 194, Lucy Burgess 214, Al Squires 202, Ron Mack 213.

Thursday Night Fun Mixed: John Moore 202, Zach Moore 203, Tim Moore 266, 222, Brandon Silvers 213, Jeb Plott 290, 247, 228, Series 765, Mike Davis 247, 215, Bob Landis 254, 225, Ray Everett 200, Tony Lynch 227, 203, Kirk Bass 200, 210.

## Tournament ...continued from 12A

edited and updated review of winners, details from some of the earlier tournaments, and a look at some of the teams and individuals who have played in previous tournaments. For many readers, most of the quite lengthy article will be largely old news with a few updates but the extensive information is provided for newcomers to the area, visitors to the tournament who have not previously had access to the information, and for some of us who are seniors who may like to refresh our memory.

**THE TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS** - Previous Battle of the States Girls Tournament Champions have been Smoky Mountain (North Carolina) in 1994, Polk County in 1995, Elbert County (Georgia) in 1996, McEachern (Georgia) in 1997, Holy Innocents' (Georgia) in 1998, Polk County again in 1999 and 2000, White County (Tennessee) in 2001, Robbinsville (North Carolina) in 2002, Fannin County (Georgia) in 2003, White County (Tennessee) again in 2004, South Cobb (Georgia) in 2005, White County (Georgia) in 2006, Fannin County again in 2007, Polk County for the fourth and fifth times in 2008 and 2009, Gordon Lee in 2010 and 2011, and Dawson County in 2012.

Boys Champions have been Walhalla (South Carolina) in 1994 and 1995, Tavares (Florida) in 1996 and 1997, Loganville (Georgia) in 1998, Andrews (North Carolina) in 1999, Union County in 2000, North Forsyth (Georgia) in 2001, Cherokee County (Alabama) in 2002, North Forsyth again in 2003, White County (Tennessee) in 2004, Chapin (South Carolina) in 2005, Union County again in 2006, Fannin County in 2007, Pendleton (South Carolina) in 2008, Southside-Gadsden in 2009, Union County for the third time (most among boys teams) in 2010, Hayesville in 2011, and Dawson County in 2012.

The 2012 tournament was just the third time for an individual school to capture both championships after White County (Tennessee) in 2004 and Fannin County in 2007 achieved that goal as Dawson County took both championships last year.

The Towns County teams have never won the tournament although the Lady Indians have finished second on seven occasions, including each of the first three years and 2008 through 2010. They have also finished third three times and fourth on four other occasions. The Indians have made it past the first round nine times, finishing second on one occasion, third on another, and in fourth place seven times.

**TOUGH COMPETITION BUILDING STRONG TEAMS** - It's a very tough assignment to win a tournament such as the Battle of the States but beyond winning such a tournament, the tough competition enables teams to get a learning experience for the remainder of the season. In looking at details from earlier tournaments, it may seem strange to look at some of the seventh place games of the past, but a close look at the teams who appeared in some of these contests gives perhaps the most interesting insight into how tough the Battle of the States Tournament can be.

In 1994, the Cherokee County (Alabama) Girls appeared in the first Tournament with a 7-1 record and ranked Second in Class 4A, with 6A being the highest classification, in their state after having won State Champions-

ships in two of the three previous years. They proceeded to lose three straight games to eventual Tournament Champion Smoky Mountain (North Carolina), Polk County, and Walhalla, with the latter two games going into overtime, for an eighth place finish. Of course, the Cherokee County Girls appeared in many subsequent Battles of the States and acquitted themselves well, including finishing second in the 2001 tournament.

In 1995, the Lake Weir (Florida) Girls appeared in the Tournament with a No. 5 ranking in Class 6A, with 6A being the highest classification, in their State. Although playing without an All American Player who was injured, they were defeated by Hayesville and Smoky Mountain before pulling away late in their game with Walhalla for seventh place.

Although the significance was not known at the time, perhaps the Seventh Place game eventually creating more discussion than any among close observers of the Tournament was the Boys contest in 1996. Polk County defeated Hayesville 50-48 in one of the most intense and interesting games of any year the Tournament has been held. No one could have anticipated it at the time, but the eighth place Hayesville Boys from the Battle of the States would become almost invincible in future weeks and play in the Dean Dome in Chapel Hill and earn a State Runner-up Trophy in Class A in North Carolina.

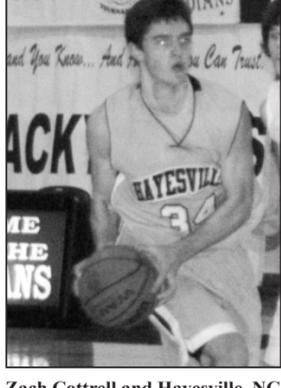
More recently, the Pisgah (Alabama) Boys, a very impressive seventh place participant in the 2003 Battle of the States, made it all the way to the Class AA State Final Four in Alabama that season where they lost by just three points to the eventual State Champion. They defeated Polk County 86-61 in the seventh place game but had fallen to North Forsyth by three points in the opening round and to Union County by seven in the second.

And the Pendleton Girls, who defeated Hayesville 75-35 in the seventh place game in the 2008 tournament, especially surprised observers of that tournament after losing to Union County by 14 points in the first round and to Gordon Lee by 18 in the second. The Lady Bulldogs battled their way through a thirty two team field to the state Class AA finals in South Carolina before losing by just a 58-54 score to Marion.

**EXCELLENCE IN THE BATTLE OF THE STATES AND CONTINUING** - Success in post season has, of course, not been limited to the teams competing for seventh place in the Battle of the States although perhaps more striking. The 1997 Battle of the States featured three teams who would make huge marks in their states during post season play. The Cherokee County Girls entered that Battle of the States with a 12-0 record and finished fifth by taking nine and five point wins over Franklin (North Carolina) and Polk County following an opening night eight point loss to fourth place Towns County. The Lady Warriors went on to win the Alabama Class AAAA State Championship for the third time in the 1990's.

The Cherokee Ladies were under the direction of Head Coach Jason Shields who currently serves as head coach of the Hokes Bluff Girls who will be making their sixth straight appearance in the tournament this year. The Paideia Boys of Atlanta finished third in that 1997 Battle of the States and went on to become State Runners-

Photos by Todd Forrest



Zach Cottrell and Hayesville, NC are one of the favorites in 2013 up in Class A in Georgia while the Paideia Girls, who finished second in the Battle of the States the same year, made it to the State Final Four in Class A.

The 1998 Battle of the States Girls Champion, Holy Innocents' of Atlanta, won the Class A State Championship in Georgia later that school year and at least two teams from the 1999 Battle of the States went on to prominence in post season play. The Towns County Lady Indians, who finished second to Polk County in the 1999 Tournament, compiled a 24-6 record in winning their sixth consecutive Sub-Region 8A North Championship and making it to the 2000 State Final Four in Class A in Georgia. Meanwhile, the 1999 Battle of the States Boys Champion Andrews Wildcats finished their season with a 24-2 record in winning their Smoky Mountain-West Conference Championship and finishing in the Final Eight in Class A in North Carolina.

Both Union County Teams from the 2000 Tournament went on to excellence in both regular and post season play as both won their Sub-Region 8-AA North Championship and had very successful postseason runs as well. The Lady Panthers, who finished fifth in the Battle of the States, made it all the way to the State Finals before losing to fellow Region 8-AA foe Greater Atlanta Christian while the Battle of the States Champion Panthers made it to the Elite Eight in Georgia.

The Towns County Lady Indians, who finished sixth in the Battle of the States that year, were no slouches either in regular season and postseason play. They finished just one game behind Union County in their Sub-Region and qualified for the state tournament for the third straight year with very impressive games played against the two Class AA state finalists. They used a 43-14 run in rallying from a 24-8 deficit in handing state runner up Union County a 58-54 regular season defeat on the Lady Panthers' home court and outplayed Greater Atlanta Christian for more than three quarters, leading 33-28 through three quarters, before falling in the Region Tournament semi-finals to the soon to be State Champions. The GAC Lady Spartans of that year featured front line players measuring 6'4", 6'2" and 6' along with Superstar Sherrill Baker, a four year star guard for the nationally prominent University of Georgia Lady Bulldogs.

The 2003 Battle of the States featured another team in addition to the aforementioned Pisgah Boys which made a strong showing in post season play. The unranked Battle of the States Champion Fannin County Girls, who had won two State Championships in the 1990's under legendary Head

Coach Johnny Farmer got stronger as their season progressed. The Lady Rebels completed a 25-8 season by finishing second in the Georgia Class AAA State Tournament, falling to fellow Region 7-AAA foe Gainesville, which featured 6'3" Superstar Tasha Humphrey, later a four year sensation with the University of Georgia.

Although the neighboring North Carolina Class A State Champion Hayesville Boys of 2004 didn't participate in the 2003 Battle of the States, they did encounter strong battles with two tournament participants. The Sixth Place Battle of the States Robbinsville Boys handed the Yellow Jackets one of just two losses, their only home court loss for the season. Further, the Third Place Battle of the States Towns County Boys were within one point with four minutes to go at Towns County and the Indians led the Yellow Jackets by a point with two minutes to go at Hayesville before the Yellow Jackets pulled away for seven point victories in each game.

And the Towns County Lady Indians, who finished third in the 2007 Battle of the States, went on to a record setting season, finishing with a 28-4 record and making it to the Georgia Class A State Final Four for the second time in nine years. They trailed by just five points near the 3-minute mark of the fourth quarter before falling in the State semi-finals by a 13 point margin to eventual state champion Calvary Day of Savannah.

The Lady Indians then followed up runner-up finishes to Polk County in the 2008 and 2009 tournaments with a Region 8-A Championship the first year and as region runners-up the second. Their records for those two years were 25-6 and 23-7 respectively and it required a team of metro all stars from the Wesleyan School in Norcross to eliminate them in the Elite Eight and Sweet Sixteen rounds respectively those two years. The Wesleyan Girls went on to easily win their sixth and seventh state championships, split between Class AA and Class A, in the last nine years.

The Lady Indians continued their stellar run the last three years, winning Region 8-A Championships all three years along with making it to the state tournament for the 11th, 12th, and 13th times in 15 years under Head Coach Jim Melton with last year's state final four appearance covered above. In 2010, the Lady Indians finished second in the Battle of the States to Gordon Lee but wound up with a spectacular 27-2 record, falling this time in the sweet sixteen round of the Class A State Tournament to Pace Academy of Atlanta, the eventual state runner up to Wesleyan.

Pace used incredible runs at the start and end of that game in taking the victory. They sank thirteen of their first twenty shots for a 27-8 lead and after the Lady Indians battled back for a 45-44 lead, hit their next eight field goal and their next four free throw attempts with three of the field goals being 3-pointers in taking a 69-54 victory. Pace went on to fall to Wesleyan in the state championship game that year and the Lady Indians fell 63-58 the next year in the Sweet 16 to the Darlington School of the West with Darlington then falling to, as one might expect Wesleyan in the next round.

The most competitive grouping of teams to date in the Tournament would have to be the Boys field in 1995 when five of a

total of 12 contests were decided in overtime and four other games were decided by seven or fewer points. A comparison of results of some of the contests reveals the competitiveness of the 1995 Tournament from top to bottom. Tournament Champion Walhalla was taken to three overtimes in the semi-finals by Fourth Place finisher Towns County who was taken to overtime by Seventh Place Gilmer (Georgia) who was taken to overtime by Eighth Place Polk County during the course of the tournament.

Further, the competitiveness of the four games among the top four finishers in 1995 is just as striking when including Second Place Franklin and Third Place Hayesville in the comparison. Franklin won in overtime in the semi-final game over Hayesville while the Championship game between Walhalla and Franklin and the Third Place Game between Hayesville and Towns County were decided by four and two points respectively.

**PLAYERS FROM PRIOR TOURNAMENTS ACHIEVING CONTINUING SUCCESS** - There have been numerous individual performers from the Battle of the States who have pursued their basketball careers and in other sports as well with great success in college, including in Division I, through the years. It would be impossible to list or even know of all the performers who have continued their careers in college but several will be identified here.

Some of the more notable among the Division I signees are Lee Scruggs, a 6'10" three year starter in the Tournament for Franklin, who went on to stardom for three years at Georgetown University in Washington, DC; Angelina Miller, also a three year starter in the Tournament for McEachern (Georgia), who was a top player for four years at Georgia State University in Atlanta; and Megan Isom of Paideia, a two year starter at Georgia Tech. Wynter Whitley of Holy Innocents' finished her career several years ago at Duke University as did Andrea Neeley of Union County at Georgia State University.

Of more recent vintage, two all tournament players from previous Battles of the States both battled injury but had significant success at Division I Kennesaw State University. Nikki Gurley of Union County earned all tournament honors in the Battle of the States three times during her career while Stephanie Searce of Fannin County made the all tournament squad in her only appearance in 2003. Kennesaw State, by the way, was coached during those years by Colby Tilly who directed Truett McConnell College to a Junior College National Championship in 1980 with Towns County's own Martha Moss being a superstar on that team.

Two other Division I players to mention are all tournament player Matt Womack of North For-

synth from 2003 and Union County's Candace Williams, a three time all tournament selection through the 2008 tournament, who each participated for a year as walk on players at the University of Georgia. Kori Penland of Gordon Lee, a 2007 Battle of the States all tournament player, completed two seasons of basketball at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga before leaving after limited action, in part due to injury, to spend more time working with faith-based groups.

And Gordon Lee superstar Cassidy Blevins, who led her team to the 2010 Battle of the States Championship and the aforementioned Class A Public State Championship last year while capturing the overall Georgia Sportswriters Class A Statewide Player of the Year honor is continuing her career at Division I Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama.

Locally, 1997 Towns County Graduate Keisha Taylor was a top flight player for NCAA Division II Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia, and the Lady Cougars being the top ranked team in the nation for much of the 2001 season. The Lady Cougars made it to the National Final Four for the second year in a row before being upset in a close decision for their only loss of the season by Cal Poly-Pomona, the eventual National Champion, in the Semi Finals.

Three vital members of the Towns County Lady Indians Class A State Final Four Team in 2000 completed successful four year college careers. Brandy McNabb completed her career in 2004 at LaGrange College as did Olivia Swanson in 2005 while Candice Blythe completed her career in 2004 at Piedmont College under the late Head Coach Charles Cooper, the 2001 Battle of the States Breakfast Banquet Speaker. And current Lady Indians Eryn Cochran

**2012 MVP Sheyenne Seabolt of Dawson Co. returns for 2013.** and Stephanie Patton are already set to continue their basketball careers and education at the college level. Cochran, a senior who has been sidelined all season with a severe ankle injury but hoping to return shortly, has signed to play at Division II Columbus State University in Columbus next year and Patton, just a junior, has verbally committed to play at Division I Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, two years from now.

