

Sweet Success

■ Lady Tigers look awesome and boys dunk their way to victory in Choctaw County's Sweetwater sweep

By Colin Merritt
The Choctaw Sun

SWEETWATER — The Choctaw County Lady Tigers didn't just beat Sweetwater on Friday, they dominated them, and looked really good in doing so.

Thanks to a relentless press-defense that was near perfect all night, the Tigers forced multiple turnovers and turned them into easy baskets during a 50-20 runaway road win that had coach Aria James beaming.

"We are peeking at the right time," Coach James said of her area-tournament bound team that never came close to trailing, holding first half team of 11-0 and 29-3. "We did a lot of things right and played with great team energy. It came together a little bit tonight."

Laquita Bush led the charge for the Lady Tigers in the win over Sweetwater with 12 points, six rebounds and six steals. The senior played with confidence all night, scoring on post-up moves, starting and finishing breaks with steals and passes, and rebounding with authority.

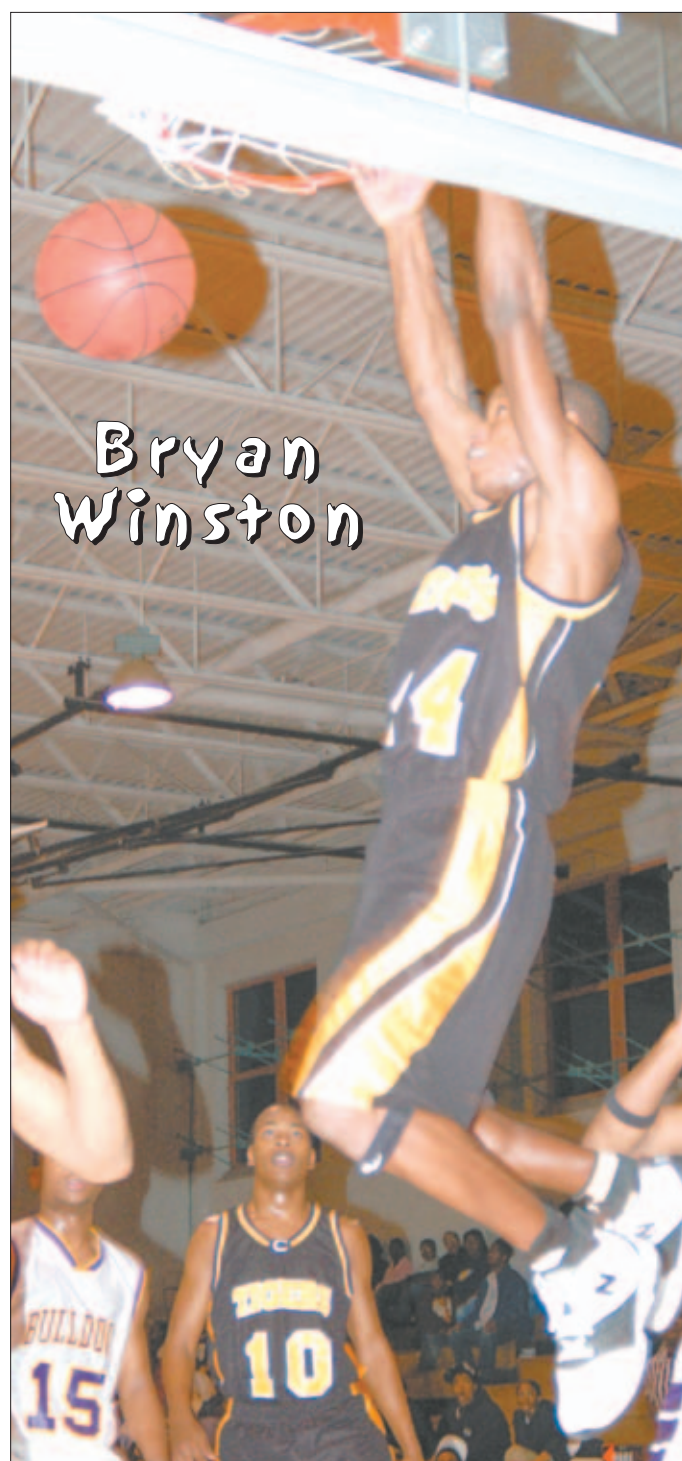
Freshman Kamille Horne scored five points with three steals, while Tashari Ruffin added six points and seven rebounds. Alisha Keeton and Tarisian Ward each added five points for the Tigers, while Iesha Chess grabbed five rebounds and made four steals.

Even though the win improved the Tigers record to just 5-13, the way they played made their coach think that they had a shot in the upcoming 3A Area 5 tournament despite their 1-5 area record and fourth place seeding.

"We are going to be a dark-horse in the tournament," smiled Coach James. "We have a great attitude and are playing our best ball right now. The timing is there for us to sneak up on someone in the postseason."

The Tigers will be the four-seed and play against host Greensboro in the February 7th tournament. If they win that game they will play the winner of Francis Marion/Sumter. The Tigers have beaten Sumter once this year and have been close in both games against Francis Marion and Greensboro.

Read about the A-team and B-team on page 2B!!



Bryan Winston



Laquita Bush

Choctaw Sun photos by Colin Merritt

Lady Saints spear Sparta

■ Third-ranked girls improve to 22-2 with road win

By Colin Merritt
The Choctaw Sun

EVERGREEN — The Lady Saints picked up a very tough road win with a 50-42 victory over Sparta on Friday night in Evergreen. The long bus trip to Evergreen (about two and a half hours via bus) might have effected the Saints shooting touch, especially at the free throw line.

"It's a long trip, but we still played pretty good," said Head Coach Wendell Barr of the victory that ran his third-ranked Saints' record to 22-2. "The effort was there, but we just couldn't hit our free throws, that concerns me a bit."

The Lady Saints shot just 40% (19-of-47) from the free throw line, but thanks to Anna Lewis and Nancy Dasis, the Saints were 6-of-7 from the line down the stretch to hold off the pesky Sparta club.

In the win, Stephanie Caudle led Patricia with 13 points, five rebounds and five steals. However, the junior had to leave the game mid-way through the third period after taking an elbow to the head in a tussle for a loose ball.

As of Monday, Caudle was still suffering with an ear ache and, according to Coach Barr, might not play in the Saints' Monday nighter against Wayne Academy in order to rest for the upcoming area tournament.

A tournament, which as of presstime, still did not have a top-seed as tie-breakers are still yet to be determined.

"Since we are in a tie-breaker, the automatic berth is now out the window," said Barr of the upcoming February 2nd-3rd area tournament to be held in Marion on the strength of their boys regular season area title. "The tie-breaker is overall 2A record. We are 14-1 and Marion is 13-1, so I think it's going to be us in the one-seed. Regardless though, we have to win that first game to make sure we advance."

The top-seed will likely be determined on Tuesday after the results from the Marion/Kingwood game are announced. If Marion loses, then PA is assured the top-seed, otherwise it will go to a tie-breaker. Although the one- and two-seeds are still up for grabs, the three- and four-seeds are cemented with Marengo and Southern respectively holding those spots.

The J.V. girls wrapped up their perfect 19-0 season with a 27-22 win over Sparta. The girls got eight point apiece from Tori Walters and Scarlett Adams, while Harley Glass added seven for the Saints.

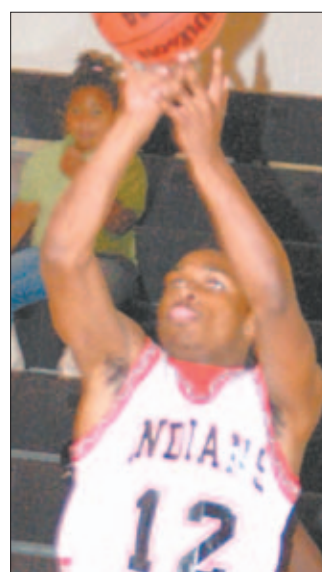
The varsity boys fell 65-26 despite 12 points from Neal Cook and eight from Thomas Crawford. They will take the four-seed into the upcoming area tournament to face host Marion in the first-round on Friday (2/1).

SCHS swept at Keith

■ Indians boys fall 66-62 to Keith

By Colin Merritt
The Choctaw Sun

ORRVILLE — Southern Choctaw's boys had to suffer through a first half where Keith hit 23-of-30 free throws en route to a 66-62 area loss on Friday night in Orrville. In all, Keith shot 47 free throws compared to just 14 for the Indians.



Deshawn Gillum

"We have had that happen to us all year," explained Indians' Head Coach Charles Chaney of the free throw discrepancy on the road. "In general, every time we hit the road the fouls seem extremely skewed."

Down by as many as twenty in the second half, the Indians would battle back in the fourth to cut the Keith lead to just one point. But Keith was able to barely hold on for the win, hitting 5-of-11 free throws down the stretch.

In the loss, Deshawn Gillum led SCHS with 10 points and eight rebounds, while Jamison Stewart hit for nine and Lorenzo Scruggs for eight. David Kirksey scored five points with seven rebounds and four assist, while Lavanda

Powe added seven rebounds and three blocks for the Indians.

Southern Choctaw (13-4, 1-3) will now take the two-seed into the February 9th 2A Area 5 tournament to be played in Uniontown at R.C. Hatch. The Indians will meet three-seed Keith in that first-round game with the winner getting Hatch in the final on February 12th. The Indians split with Keith this season, but lost both games to Hatch.

The Indian girls got blasted, 75-11, by Keith, and the B-team also lost ugly, 44-22. The Indians will host Millry (1/30) on Tuesday before facing Choctaw County (2/2) and Marengo (1/3) on the road.

Rebels to host area tournament this Thursday

TOXEY -- On the strength of their top-seeded girls team, South Choctaw will host the AISA 1A West Region tournament this Thursday and Friday.

The Rebel girls will take to the court at 6 p.m. Thursday to face West Alabama, while

the boys also play West Alabama at 4:45 p.m. Also on Thursday, Central/Sumter girls at 3:30 and Central/Sumter boys at 7:15.

The championship games will be on Friday. The girls will play at 6 p.m. and the boys at 7 p.m.