

Sports

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Baseball: Panthers open playoffs Friday at Stephens County

By Todd Forrest
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The 2025 regular season is in the books, and the Panthers are back in the playoffs for the first time in three years, securing their first winning record in six years.

Union County, which enters State as the No. 20 seed, visits No. 13 Stephens County for a Friday night doubleheader in the best-of-three series. The if necessary game is Saturday. Game times were unavailable at the time of this writing.

Union closes the 2025 regular season with a 14-11 mark - the most wins since 2019 - following a Monday, April 14 victory over Andrews, North Carolina, and a pair of April 18 losses at No. 4 Rockmart.

“Climbing our first winning season in six years is a sign the program is showing improvement,” Union County head coach Chris Robbins said.

Panthers 13, Andrews, NC 3 - Maddox Patton sent the first pitch of the Union County first inning over the centerfield fence, and the Panthers cruised to a six-inning 13-3 victory over the visiting Wildcats.

Patton finished the game 2 for 2 with two runs and an RBI. Fellow junior Lane Haney went 2 for 2 with a run, an RBI and a stolen base.

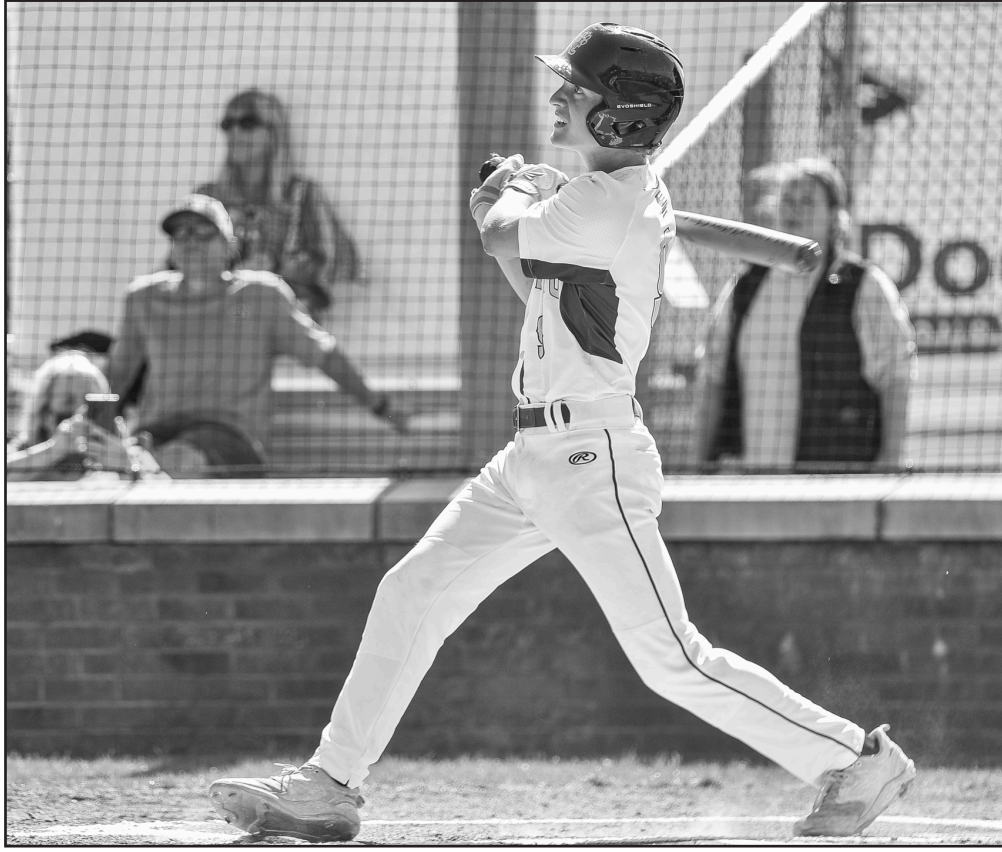
Senior Tyler Richards got the nod and fanned eight over 3 2/3 innings, allowing four hits and an earned run. Senior Hayden Hughes worked 2 1/3 scoreless innings in relief, allowing two hits and striking out five.

Patton’s leadoff homer followed a top-half of the first where Richards punched out the side after surrendering a triple to start the game.

Union County made it 3-0 in the third when Patton doubled, Haney lined an RBI single to center and came around to score on Bo Brown’s double.

Andrews rallied to tie the game in the fourth via two singles, an error, a walk and a hit batter before Hughes replaced Richards and induced an inning-ending groundout.

The Panthers answered with three in the bottom half when freshman Hudson Collins opened the frame with a base hit. Colten Gibson followed



Junior Maddox Patton watches his leadoff home run vs. Andrews, NC sail over the centerfield fence on Monday, April 14. Photo/Todd Forrest

with a single, and freshman Camden Kendrick laced a two-run single into left field. Chetley Cox added a sacrifice fly, spotting Union a 6-3 lead after four.

The Panthers tacked on two more when Hughes walked to begin the Union half of the fifth, eventually coming around via an error off the bat of freshman Corbin Combs. Later in the inning, Gibson added on, courtesy of a two-out opposite-field single, bringing home Combs.

Union County brought the mercy rule into effect by putting up five in the sixth, opening the inning with an Adin Mason single and a Cox walk. After the Panthers put two aboard, Karter Conley singled home Mason, Hughes was hit by a pitch and Jackson Nichols’ base knock plated a run.

Combs drew a bases-loaded walk, and Collins’ two-run double ended the contest.

Collins finished 2 for 3 with a run, two RBIs and a stolen base. Kendrick doubled and drove in two during a 1-for-2 afternoon; Nichols and Conley each went 1 for 2 with a run and an RBI; Combs was 1 for 1 with a walk, a run and two RBIs.

Gibson was 2 for 3 with one run and an RBI; Mason

scored once during a 1-for-2 day; Cox scored and drove in one.

Brown finished 1 for 2 with an RBI double. Travis Tracy went 1 for 1; Hughes scored twice; Bentley Rich drew a walk.

Panthers 0, No. 4 Rockmart 8 (Game 1) - Union County didn’t do any favors for junior ace Gunnar Akins at Rockmart, committing seven errors in an 8-0 loss during game one of a doubleheader on Friday.

“We had too many errors,” Robbins said. “We were forcing Gunnar to get five or six outs in an inning. You can’t do that against anyone, especially against a team like Rockmart.”

Offensively, the Panthers mustered only three singles and a walk as Rockmart scored three in the first, one in the fourth, three in the fifth and one in the sixth.

Akins went the distance during a 101-pitch outing, giving up eight hits, two earned runs, four walks and two hit batters. Hughes, Rich and Eli Gwynn each collected singles, while Haney worked a free pass and Tracy was hit by a pitch.

Two Rockmart singles and two Union errors in the first led to the 3-0 deficit. Hughes and Rich singled in the second but were left aboard after a groundout and a strikeout ended the frame.

The Panthers couldn’t capitalize on Gwynn’s base hit to led off the third, and Rockmart added one in the fourth courtesy of two walks, an error and an RBI single.

The Yellowjackets used three singles and an error to tack on three more in the fifth, and then a double and an error resulted in their eighth run of the game the following inning.

Union County 7, No. 4 Rockmart 9 (9 innings - Game 2) - The Panthers answered Rockmart’s two-run first with six in the bottom half, but couldn’t hang on, eventually yielding the tying run in the seventh and giving up two more in the ninth.

The Yellowjackets scored two off Gwynn in the first but Union responded with a 6-spot in its half of the inning when the first six hitters reached base.

Patton walked and scored on a wild pitch. Akins singled and Hughes was hit



Sophomore Bentley Rich advances to third vs. Andrews. On Friday, he had three hits during the doubleheader at Rockmart. Photo/Todd Forrest

on a 3-0 count. Haney was plunked, Brown’s single drove in Akins and Hughes, and Rich followed with an RBI double.

Gibson made it 6-2 via a base hit before the Rockmart limited the damage with an inning-ending double play.

Rockmart answered with a two-run triple and an RBI single in the third. And in the fourth, with Gibson on the mound, the Yellowjackets used a two-out run-scoring triple to knot the score at 6-6.

Still tied in the bottom of the sixth, Rich opened with a base hit to center, and following consecutive strikeouts, Gwynn’s infield single kept the inning alive allowing to Patton roll a grounder into left that scored Rich.

Rockmart loaded the bases with two away in the seventh when Gibson was called for a run-scoring balk with the Panthers one strike away from upsetting another ranked region opponent.

“That’s the third time this year we’ve had a balk call go against us in the late innings,” Robbins said. Yes, it was a questionable call, and I needed an explanation from the umpire, but it seems like every

game we shoot ourselves in the foot at the absolute worst time.”

Rockmart retired Union 1-2-3 in the bottom of the seventh and Gibson worked a scoreless eighth.

Following another uneventful Union County half-inning, Rockmart went on top with two in the ninth by way of two singles and a double.

Patton reached on a dropped third strike in the bottom of the ninth but the Jackets retired the next three Union hitters.

Rich finished 2 for 4 with a double, two runs and an RBI. Gwynn doubled and went 2 for 4; Brown and Gibson knocked in two each during a pair of 1-for-4 nights.

Patton walked twice, scored and plated another run while going 1 for 3. Akins walked, scored and went 1 for 4; Haney and Hughes added a run apiece; Tracy drew a walk.

Gwynn went three innings, allowing six hits, five earned and one walk while striking out three. Gibson gave up eight hits, four earned, three walks and fanned three over five innings. Hughes allowed one hit in 2/3 of an inning.

Local race results: Tri-County

Brasstown, NC - Due to the Easter holiday, Tri-County changed its schedule to Friday night.

The evening began with an Easter egg hunt for the kids in the end field. Over 60 cars were in attendance, and the track ran six classes.

The next race is scheduled for May 10, 2025.

Now, let’s get to the race results.

Crown Vic - Adam Phillips, No. 120Z from Canton, N.C., took home the win. Second place went to Conner Green, No. G4 from Blue Ridge, Ga. Third place was Richard Ames, No. 6 from Ellijay, Ga.

602 Crate Late Model - Bryson Hickman, No. B01 from Ootlewah, Tenn., secured the victory. Colton Berrong, No. 56 from Murphy, finished in second. Third place went to Ricky Smith, No. 88 from Hiwassee, Ga.

Late Model - Dante Curtis, No. 03 from Murphy, claimed the win. Shawn Chas-

tain, No. 00 from Murphy, finished second. Greg Sudderth, No. 34 from Brasstown, N.C., came in third.

Open Wheel Modified - Matt Sandefur, No. 22 from Mineral Bluff, Ga., took the top spot. David Pollen, No. 88 from Tampa, Fla., finished second. Third place went to Brawley Stillwell, No. 91 from Andrews, N.C.

FWD - Phillip Hall, No. 47 from Andrews, N.C., won the race. Michael Beeman, No. 28 from Young Harris, Ga., finished second. Chris Leitner, No. 721 from Murphy, took third.

Street Stock - Matt Whitener, No. 03 from Canton, N.C., was the winner. Dylan Hannah, No. 81 from Clyde, N.C., came in second. Roger Beaver, No. 2 from Murphy, N.C., finished third.

Jason and Jamie would like to thank everyone for their continued support of the track.

Please come out and join us for the next event on May 10, 2025.

2024-2025 GHSA Class AA State Baseball Championship

<p>Morgan Co Team 1</p> <p>Butler Team 32</p> <p>Jackson Team 17</p> <p>Ringgold Team 16</p> <p>Thomson Team 9</p> <p>Hart Co Team 24</p> <p>Therrell Team 25</p> <p>Appling Co Team 8</p>	<p>Burke Co Team 5</p> <p>Josey Team 28</p> <p>E Jackson Team 21</p> <p>Franklin Co Team 12</p> <p>Stephens Co Team 13</p> <p>Union Co Team 20</p> <p>Rutland Team 29</p> <p>Redan Team 4</p>	<p>Pierce Co Team 3</p> <p>S Atlanta Team 30</p> <p>Hardaway Team 19</p> <p>Cook Team 14</p> <p>Shaw Team 11</p> <p>Crisp Co Team 22</p> <p>Sonoraville Team 27</p> <p>Columbus Team 6</p>	<p>Callaway Team 7</p> <p>Coahulla Cr Team 26</p> <p>Jordan Team 23</p> <p>Drew Charter Team 10</p> <p>Pike Co Team 15</p> <p>Hapeville Team 18</p> <p>Salem Team 31</p> <p>Rockmart Team 2</p>					
Apr 25-26	May 1-2	May 7-8	May 13-14	May 19-22	May 13-14	May 7-8	May 1-2	Apr 25-26
Champion								
Runner-Up								

In the first four rounds, the higher seeded team will host. In any round where both teams are the same seed, a "universal" GHSA coin flip will determine the host school (or the designated home team for Game One in a neutral-site final). Exceptions to the scheduled dates may be made with the approval of the Executive Director.

Soccer playoffs: Boys travel to Pierce County, ladies at Callaway

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Despite closing the regular season with wins over a pair of Class AAA programs (North Hall, at Lumpkin), the 18th-seeded Union County men dropped in the postseason power rankings and are going on the road for the first-round of the GHSA Class AA State Tournament, visiting No. 15 Pierce County on Friday, April 25 - time TBD.

"I don't know a lot about Pierce, but I know they play in a

very good region, especially on the boys side," Union County head coach Tim Hunter said.

Pierce County (11-4) already owns a victory over the region's top-seed Tattnall County, but suffered losses to Crisp County and Appling County, both of which qualified for the State tournament as top-14 seeds.

The Union County at Pierce County winner will take on the winner of No. 31 Therrell at No. 2 Tattnall County in the Round of 16.

The higher seeded team will host each round until next

month's championship game in Macon.

The Union County ladies, who suffered a 9-0 loss at Lumpkin County on Thursday, also dropped to 18th and will travel to No. 15 Callaway (Hogansville) for a 5:30 p.m. start on Thursday.

According to Hunter, who recently surpassed 325 career wins, Callaway poses a tough test, but it's still a very winnable game.

"Callaway is a good team, but I don't think they're on the same level as some of the top teams in our region,"

he said. "They are a very good, but they are not an unbeatable team. Honestly, the game is going to come down to who plays well. So if our girls go down there and play well, they have a very good chance to win that ball game."

The winner of Union-Callaway will face the winner of No. 31 South Atlanta at No. 2 Columbus.

Callaway enters with a 13-5 record and went 6-4 in region play, suffering two losses each to 7th-seeded Morgan County and Class AA's top-seeded Pike County.

Last week, Union County closed out the regular season at Lumpkin County after Tuesday's trip to Gilmer was cancelled.

The Union County men (9-4) escaped Dahlonega with a 2-1 victory courtesy of late goals from senior Antonio Solorio and sophomore Gray Gwynn.

Trailing 1-0 with under 10 minutes remaining, Solorio's delivered the equalizer courtesy of a nifty scissor kick goal.

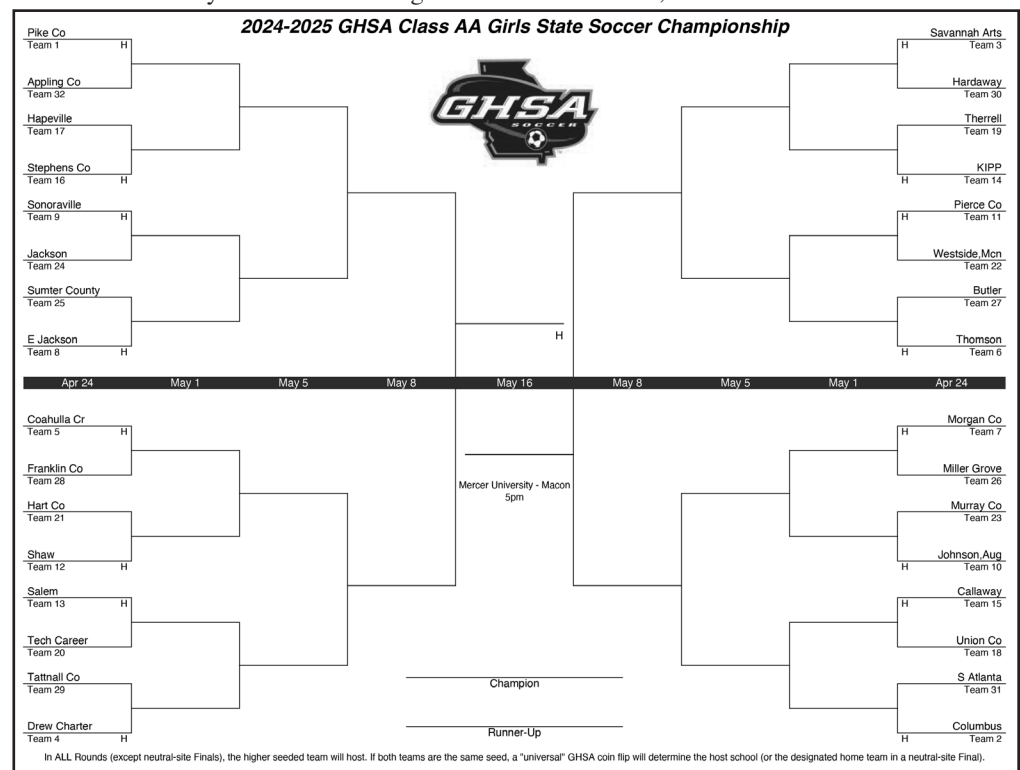
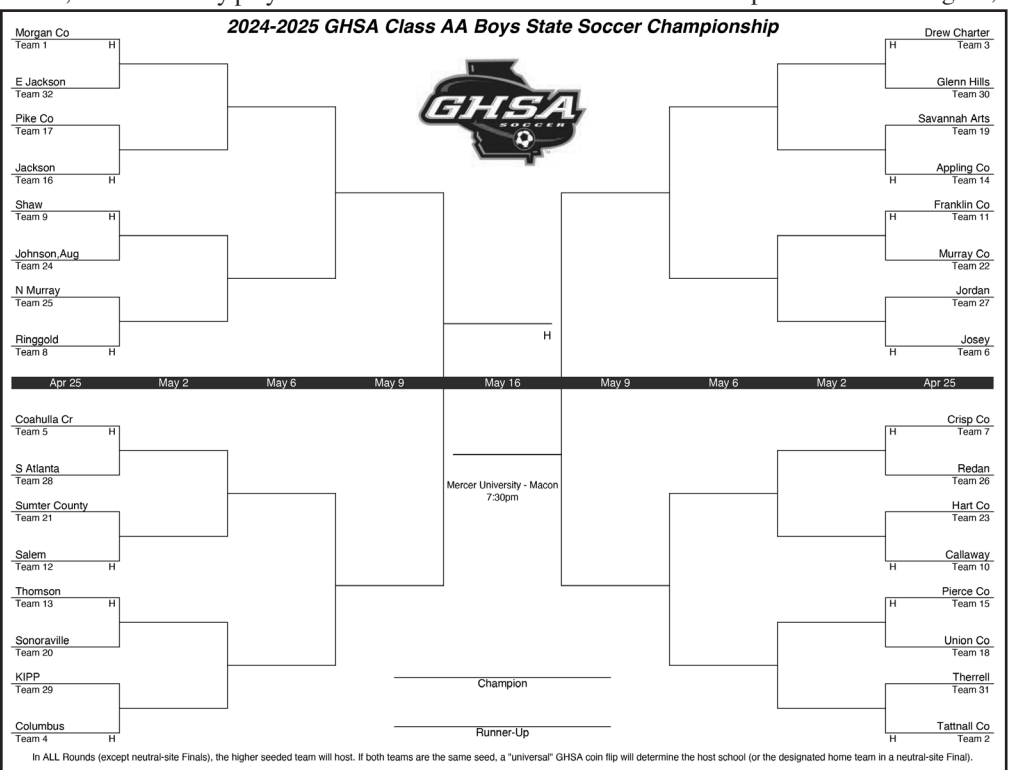
"It was one of the prettiest goals I have ever seen,"

Hunter said. "And it was a huge goal."

Moments later, in the 77th minute, Gwynn scored the game-winner, handing Union County its sixth consecutive victory over Lumpkin County.

Earlier in the day, the Lady Panthers (7-6-1) dropped a 9-0 contest at Lumpkin. Despite the loss, Union is guaranteed a .500 finish for the first time since 2022.

During last week's loss, Lumpkin County scored three first-half goals before pouring it on with six over the final 40 minutes.



Track wraps up at Dawson, Creekview; Region 7-AA meet this week

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Union County track and field closed out the regular season last week with meets at Dawson County and Canton's Creekview High ahead of this week's region meet at Coahulla Creek.

Daniel Mcphee took home two gold medals as Union County's track and field team traveled to Dawson on Tuesday, April 15. Mcphee placed first in the long jump and triple jump events, posting distances of 19 feet, 6 inches, and 40 feet, 3 inches, respectively.

Jackson Totherow was second in the shot put at 47-7, he also placed third in the discus at 126 feet.

Christian Mullins turned in a 38-1 in the triple jump to earn silver. The girls' 4x400 relay team was second at 5 minutes, 29.97 seconds. The girls' 4x100 and 4x200 came in third at 58.75 and 2:06.22, respectively. The boys' 4x100-meter relay team gained a third-place finish with a time of 49.84.

Matthew Sisenstein was third in the 400M at 58.58.

In other events, Sophia Gobin led the sprints for Union County, securing 10th place in the 100M dash with a time of 14.53 and ninth in the 200M dash at 31.35. In the 400M dash, Neva Brott clocked 1:17.09 to finish sixth, while Chloe Iler and McKenzie Bourbeau followed closely, placing eighth and 10th respectively.

Brott and Bourbeau also competed in the 800M run, finishing 6th (3:32.40) and 7th (3:36.62). In hurdles, Kensley Payne achieved a fifth-place finish in the 100M hurdles with a time of 20.74. Jacey Hughes and Hannah Maier placed seventh and eighth respectively. Hughes also secured fourth in the 300-meter hurdles (1:06.37), with Maier close behind in fifth (1:10.89).

In girls' field events, Maier cleared 4 feet to place fourth in the high jump. Payne and Marlee Cisneros competed in the long jump, finishing seventh and 12th respectively.



Union County's track-and-field seniors look to put an exclamation point on their high school careers during the 2025 postseason, which begins Tuesday at Coahulla Creek. Photo/Todd Forrest

Lillie Rotko placed 10th in both the discus (40-3) and shot put (16-10).

In the boys' sprints, Leland Mason led Union County in the 100M dash, finishing 11th with a time of 12.85. Ayden Weaver posted a 14th-place finish in the 200M (27.64 seconds).

Jake Payne and Sawyer Alexander placed seventh and eighth in the 800M run, with times of 2:44.98 and 2:45.06 respectively. Alexander also competed in the 1600M race, finishing 11th at 6:18.47.

Gunnar Ingram was seventh in the discus (99 feet) and eighth in the shot put (33-11). Alan Godinez was ninth in the shot put (32-9) and 14th in the discus (75-4). Elijah Stringer placed 13th in the shot put (31-6) and 15th in the discus (73-11).

Creekview Last Chance Meet - Ava Lloyd turned in a dominant performance at the Creekview Last Chance Meet on Tuesday, April 15, capturing

first place in the girls' 100M (12.62) and adding a runner-up finish in the 200M (26.80). Right behind her in both events was teammate Ava Klein, who took second in the 100M at 12.77 and third in the 200 with a time of 26.95.

Sophomore Sofia Foster delivered a third-place finish in the shot put at 35-2.75 inches.

Jacob Turner of Union County High School secured a second-place finish in the boys' 110-meter hurdles at Creekview. He completed the race in 16.31 seconds, marking the men's top performance of the day. Additionally, Union County's Jackson Totherow achieved a third-place finish in the boys' shot put with a throw of 46-2.5. Sisenstein claimed a top-three, finishing third in the 400M with a time of 55.52 seconds.

In other girls' events, Izzy Anthros secured 19th place at 13.96 in the 100M, followed by Adelyn Cisneros in 25th at 14.23. Cisneros also

competed in the 200M dash, finishing 28th in 30.61 seconds, while Amaria Johnson recorded a time of 33.11 seconds for 35th place.

Klein led the team in the 400M, placing seventh with a time of 1:04.10. Nomi Nelson and Sofia Foster followed, finishing 21st (1:09.30) and 32nd (1:13.25), respectively. Lydia Wagner completed the event in 1:19.76, earning 34th place.

In the 1600M run, Lola Hunter achieved 10th place with a time of 5:57.18. Teammates Avery Hussion and Averie Tanner finished 16th (6:24.10) and 22nd (6:42.26), respectively. Hunter also competed in the 3200M run, securing fifth place with a time of 12:22.52. Kate Barrett completed the 3200M in 14:50.72, placing 11th.

Gracie Miller placed eighth in the 100M hurdles with a time of 18.98, while Reagan McCarter and Sara Patterson finished 10th (19.15) and 16th (20.93), respectively. In the

300M hurdles, Miller again led the team, placing eighth with a time of 54.05 seconds. McCarter and Patterson followed in 10th (55.50) and 13th (57.37), respectively. Katie Payne secured 11th place with a time of 56.38.

The Panthers' girls relay teams delivered solid performances: The 4x100-meter relay: fifth place - 54.03; the 4x200-meter relay: seventh place - 2:05.17; the 4x400-meter relay: eighth place - 4:51.02; the 4x800-meter relay: eighth place - 12:11.98.

In the high jump, Miller cleared 4-6 inches to place seventh. The long jump saw Lloyd reach 15-6.5 inches, earning seventh place. Abby Barrett and Marlee Cisneros followed with jumps of 14-4.5 inches (13th place) and 14-0.5 (16th place), respectively.

Barrett also competed in the triple jump, securing ninth place at 31-5.5. Nelson and Anthros reached distances of 29 feet 4.5 inches (13th place)

and 28 feet 5.25 inches (15th place), respectively.

In the discus throw, Leslie Rash and Sofia Foster placed 11th (79-7.5) and 13th (78-11), respectively. Averie Tanner recorded a throw of 54-10, earning 24th place.

For the boys, Union County's relay squads each turned in top-10 finishes, led by the 4x100's fifth-place finish at 45.97. The 4x200 was sixth at 1:38.50; the 4x400 came in seventh with a time of 3:52.10; the 4x800-meter relay placed eighth, clocking in at 9:45.00.

Tyler Parker and Haze Burnett led the way for the Panthers in the 100M, finishing 21st (11.70) and 23rd (11.71), respectively. Parker returned in the 200M with a 15th-place finish (23.55), followed by Burnett in 22nd (24.05) and Landan Bell in 43rd (25.81). Dylan Birnbaum also contributed a 38th-place showing in the 100M (12.35). Ayden Weaver finished 14th in 59.73 seconds during the 400M race.

In the 1600M, the Panthers were led by Arthur Bowman (16th, 4:57.96), Oliver Hillman (17th, 4:58.67) and Noah Payne (19th, 5:07.39). Andrew Nushtayev added a 22nd-place finish in 5:16.73.

In the 3200, Holten Fleming clocked in at 13:08.50 to place 21st.

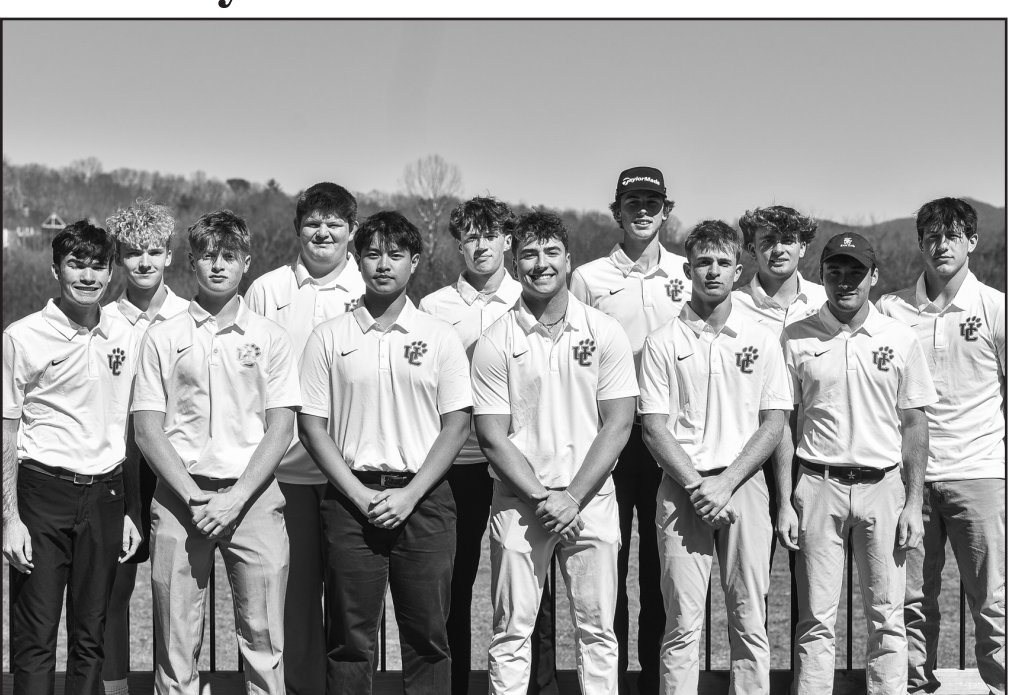
In the 110 hurdles, Micah Wallace (10th at 17.96), Anthony Heredia (16th at 19.12), and Kyler Juracka (22nd at 21.82) competed for Union County. Additionally, Wallace and Heredia placed 13th (47.03) and 19th (48.50), respectively, in the 300M hurdles.

Union travels to Coahulla Creek for the Region 7-AA meet on Tuesday at 11 a.m. The second and final day of the region meet is Friday at 11 a.m.

Qualifiers from the region meet will advance to the Class AA State Sectionals on May 3, hosted by Miller Grove High School at Decatur's Buck Godfrey Stadium.

East Jackson High School will host the Class AA State Championships on May 9-10.

Golf: Boys suffer first loss at Old Toccoa, bounce back with best round of spring



Coming off of Spring Break, Union boys and girls both lost nail biters by one stroke each at Fannin's Old Toccoa Farm on April 15. Hayden Price tied for low medalist with a 38. Sofia Charbonneau was the girls overall low medalist with a 48. Two days later, the boys had the best round of the year with a total score of 162 to Gilmer's 183. Price, Huston West and Will Henson all tied for low medalist with a 40. Turner West also contributed to the team with a 42. The girls won against Gilmer 101-112. Charbonneau was the low medalist with a 46, and Aubrie Akins, Peyton Grisham and Delaney Moses each shot 55. Photos/Todd Forrest