

Sports

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Track: Union sends four to Sectionals; Barrett wins region in 100M

Underwood finishes third in 3200M; joins Barrett in the UCHS record books

By Todd Forrest
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Blue Ridge - Records fell and champions were crowned at last week's Region 7-AAA Track and Field meet.

Union County Track set records in the boys 100-meter and 3200M events and also claimed a region title in the 100M race.

Junior Riley Barrett clocked in at 11.28 seconds in the 100M to claim the Region 7-AAA championship and break the school record in the process.

In the 200M, he crossed the finish line in 23.2 - just shy of his own school record and good enough for second in region.

However, Barrett's most impressive showing of the week was a third place finish in the Long Jump.

Competing in the Long Jump for just the third time this season, his jump of 20-feet, 1-inch was only 8 inches shy of the region champ and good enough to advance.

"He just started long jumping shortly after mid-season for the first time in his track-and-field career," Union County Head Coach Shawnetta Reece said.

"He had only two meets in the season where he long jumped before he competed at region.

"I had no doubt that he could qualify after seeing how quickly he improved each week. I also have no doubt that he can advance past Sectionals and go to Albany as a rookie jumper."

Junior Lance Underwood also made history by break-

ing a 46-year old record in the 3200M.

His finishing time of 10:31 was third fastest in Region 7-AAA and the best time ever posted by a UCHS runner, breaking David Bryant's record from 1971.

In the girls' 3200M race, Union County freshman Zoe Sanchez placed second - four seconds shy of her school record time of 12:28.

In the 1600M, she set a personal best time of 5:46, en route to a third place finish to qualify for the Sectionals in two separate events.

"Zoe was seeded sixth in the 1600M going into the race but did exactly what was expected of her to defy the odds and advance," Coach Reece said. "We knew she had to go sub-6 (minutes), and to do that, she had to stay with the lead pack, draft when possible and use other specific strategies to pull off a top 4 finish. She did everything asked of her perfectly."

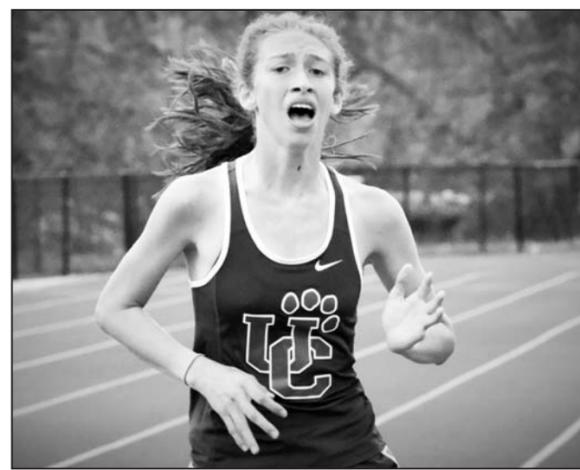
Union's other State Sectionals qualifier is Cole Wright, who placed fifth in the Triple Jump at 41-4.75 - a personal record (PR).

According to Coach Reece, Wright will advance due to the absence of a top four finisher at Sectionals.

The Sectionals will be held Saturday at SE Bulloch High School in Brooklet.

Other UCHS competitors that didn't advance to Sectionals but placed high enough to contribute points to the team standings were: Skyler Ludlum - sixth place in the Shot Put with a personal record.

Latty Ryals - sixth place



Clockwise: Junior Riley Barrett took home hardware in both the 100M (gold) and 200M (silver) events while setting a new UCHS record in the 100M. Junior Lance Underwood as he crosses the finish line at the conclusion of his record breaking performance in the 3200M race. Freshman Zoe Sanchez places second in the 3200M with a time of 12:32 - four seconds short of her own record. She was also third in the 1600M event. All three qualified for State Sectionals this weekend. Photos courtesy of Jenni Dixon and Twitter@PANTHERSTRACK.

in the 1600M with a PR time of 6:09 and sixth in the 800M with a PR time of 2:41.

Dylan Dockery - sixth place in the 300 Hurdles.

Wright - sixth place in the Long Jump with a PR of 19-01.

The Girls 4x100 relay team (Jordan Stubblefield, Evelyn McBride, Keeley Mobley and

Aladriel Arnold) - fifth place.

Others competing for Union County at region were Courtney Moose - Shot Put; Jared Herum - 200M and 4x400; Adrian

Shaw - 400m, 4x100 and 4x400.

Bryan Nelson - 400M and 4x400; Timothy Murphy - 800M; Kanon Hemphill - 4x100; Chad Buzzard - 4x400.

Baseball: Panthers take two at East Hall to close out 2017 season

All three games go nine innings as Union takes two-of-three from Vikings in marathon series

By Todd Forrest
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Union County's season went six innings longer than expected after going nine innings in three straight games en route to winning its first Region 7-AAA series of the year by taking two-of-three from East Hall.

Although, the series didn't get off on the right foot as the Panthers dropped game one at home after jumping ahead 5-0 in the first and 8-3 in the fourth.

The Vikings pulled within one during the sixth, then knotted the score with a run in the seventh.

East Hall took its first lead with a run in the ninth to steal game one after a two-out walk by freshman Pierson Allison was all the offense Union could muster in its final at bat.

Traveling to Rabbittown for a Friday doubleheader, the Panthers found themselves locked in another extra inning affair, where once again, it was the visitors who broke through in the ninth.

A base hit by Logan Dyer broke the 1-1 tie and Del Ruff recorded the win on the mound by tossing the final five innings - allowing just 3 hits and one run while striking out four in a 3-1 victory.

In the night cap of the doubleheader, RJ Banton drove in three runs and Crawford Colwell knocked in a pair to lead Union to an 8-4 win.

All tied up at 4-4 in the bottom of the eighth, East Hall put two aboard with nobody out when Coleson Daniel took over on the mound and got out of trouble with a double play. The Panthers' lineup reward Daniel with the W by exploding for four runs in the ninth that began with three straight singles by Dawson Groves, Carter Wright and Patrick Baggett to take a 5-4 lead.

A one-out base hit by Banton made it 6-4 and Crawford Colwell drove in another run with an opposite field single.

Ruff capped off the scoring with a sacrifice fly to center to score Banton and spot the Panthers a four-run lead.

However, it was the Vikings who took control early with a run in the first off Union's lefty starter Ean Harkins. They extended the lead to 2-0 with a two-out, RBI single in the third, but the Panthers got it back in the fourth thanks to a run-scoring ground out by Harkins.

Trailing 2-1 in the fifth, Dyer doubled with one down



Sophomore Coleson Daniel with a two-run base hit in game one of last week's region series vs East Hall. Photo/Todd Forrest

and Crawford Colwell delivered a two-out single to even the score at 2-all.

Still tied up with two down in the seventh, Banton scored Baggett and Dyer with a double to center - giving Union a 4-2 advantage with three outs remaining.

With one down and runners on second and third, a Panther error and a sac fly to left knotted the score up with the winning run on second, but freshman right hander Cayden Rich mowed down the next Viking hitter to send the game into extras for the third consecutive time.

Union went down 1-2-3 in the eighth before Daniel entered in the bottom half of the inning and escaped from a two-on, no-out jam.

Candler Colwell finished with a 3-for-5 day at the plate while Baggett, Banton, Crawford Colwell and Cole Davis recorded two-hits apiece.

Earlier in the day, the Panthers and East Hall were tied 1-1 through seven innings despite four shutout innings from southpaw Cole Davis.

Union finally scored a

pair in the ninth when Dyer singled to plate Allison. Banton followed with an RBI ground out to spot his team a 3-1 advantage.

A one-out single was all the offense the Vikings could manufacture off Ruff in their final at bat, after he induced a fly out and a ground out to end the game and even the series.

For six-plus innings, both squads were locked in a pitcher's duel as the game remained scoreless into the seventh inning until a one-out triple by Harkins allowed Baggett to break the scoreless tie with a sacrifice fly.

East Hall opened the seventh with two singles sandwiched around a strikeout, then, like the Panthers moments earlier, a sac fly brought in a run to force extra innings.

In the series opener, Union jumped out to a 5-0 lead but took its foot off the gas enough for the Vikings to chip away and pull within a run entering the seventh.

Leading 8-3 after four, the Panthers appeared to be in control but East Hall got two in the fifth and two more in the sixth

to make it an 8-7 game.

Three base hits were magnified by a Union throwing error in the fifth to pull the Vikings to within three at 8-5.

In the bottom half of the inning, the Panthers left two in scoring position and East Hall took advantage with two more in the sixth after a sun caused Baggett to lose sight of a soft liner to shortstop with one down.

Following a fly out to center for out number two, the Vikings chased Banton from the mound with an RBI double after 100-plus pitches. Harkins replaced Banton and surrendered another double to trim the Union lead to 8-7.

Jackson Colwell replaced Harkins in the seventh and fanned two of the first three hitters he faced. With a runner on first and two down, consecutive walks loaded the bases, but Jackson Colwell quickly got ahead of the ensuing batter with an 0-2 count. Unfortunately, his 1-2 pitch resulted in ground ball into left to tie the game before he would struck out the side to end the inning.

In the bottom of the sev-

enth, Candler Colwell singled to lead off the inning and Wright moved him to second with a bunt. With the winning run in scoring position, Daniel drew a base-on-balls but a fly out and ground out ended the inning for the Panthers.

Jackson Colwell returned to the mound in the eighth and retired the Vikings in order but Union couldn't take advantage of a two-out walk by Ruff in the bottom half of the inning.

Two East Hall walks to open the ninth was followed by a passed ball putting runners on second and third with no outs.

A sac bunt brought in the go ahead run before Rich, who replaced Jackson Colwell on the mound, escaped with a strikeout and a line out to Allison at first.

Allison would be the only Panther to reach base in their final at bat after drawing a two-out walk. However, he would never reach second as the Vikings pulled off a six-run rally for the win.

Union's five-run first opened with a Baggett single, an error off the bat of Dyer and a two-run single from Banton.

Ruff was hit by a pitch, Crawford Colwell was walked and Groves made it 3-0 with a ground out to first. Daniel delivered a two-out, two run base hit that opened up a 5-0 advantage.

Three walks, a hit batter, and an error led to three East Hall runs in the third but the Panthers responded when Daniel brought home a run with a bases loaded ground out for a 6-3 lead. They would extend their advantage to 8-3 when Banton scored Baggett and Dyer with a single in the fifth.

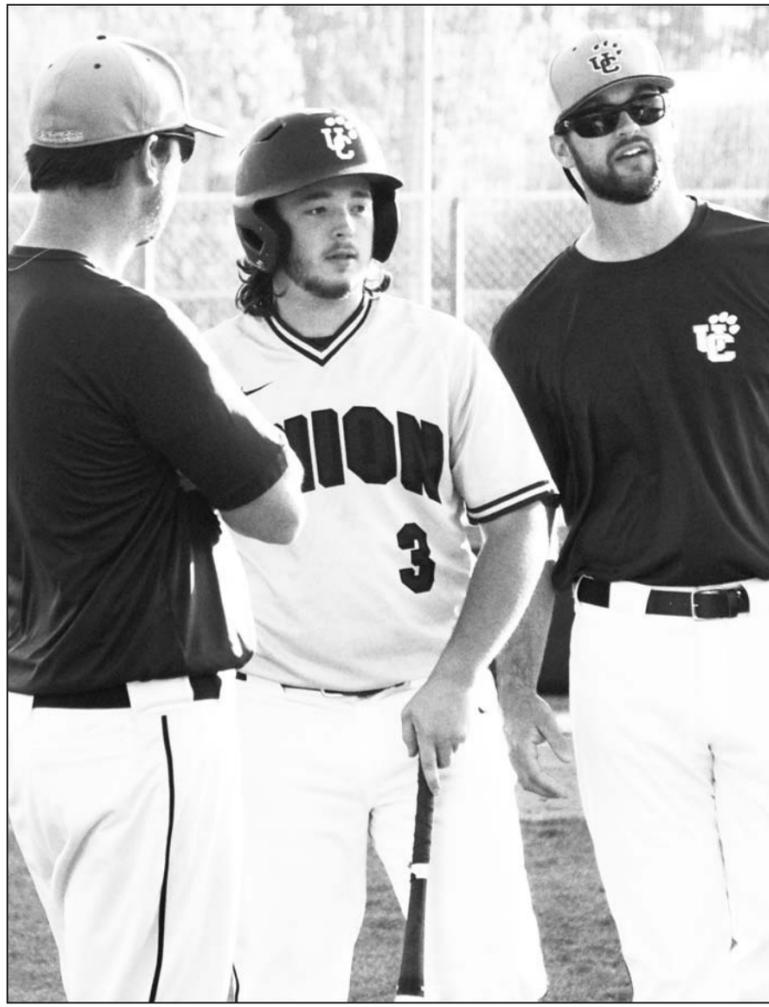
Banton went 2-for-4 with 4 RBIs and would eventually finish the series with 8 RBIs after driving in one in game two and three in game three.

On the mound he worked 5 2/3 innings, striking out five, and scattering 6 hits while allowing 7 runs - three earned - with six walks.

Daniel finished 2-for-3 at the plate with 3 RBIs.

Baggett and Crawford Colwell also turned in a two-hit game for Union.

UCHS baseball's season stat totals can be found on Page 3C.



Junior Del Ruff is joined by Coach Avery (left) and Coach Garrett (right). Ruff scored, drove in a run, and picked up a win on the mound during the series vs East Hall. Photo/Todd Forrest