

# UCHS softball summer league breaks even during final week

Regular season opens with Region 7-AAA battle as North Hall visits on Aug. 10

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The preseason is in the books and Union County softball begins its official practice on Tuesday, Aug. 1.

Last week Union County wrapped up summer league play with a pair of home wins, followed by two road losses.

The wins came on Wednesday when the Lady Panthers throttled White County 10-3 and pulled away from Gilmer County 6-1.

In the win over White, Union jumped out to a 10-0 advantage in the second inning behind a homer by senior Jillian Lawn.

White got three runs back in the third before the game was called (time limit) after four.

Later in the day, Gilmer used a pair of two out hits to grab an early 1-0 lead. But it was short-lived as Aubree Pack drove in two with a base hit and Mary Wischmeyer sent a two-run bomb into the parking lot beyond the left field fence.

Leading 4-1 in the fourth, junior Bailey Rayfield tripled home another run and fellow junior Aladriel Arnold scored Rayfield with a sacrifice fly.

At Stephens County on Thursday, the Lady Panthers were the victims of overpowering pitching as the AAAA Lady Indians used three unearned runs to defeat Union County 4-0 in game one.

Lawn got the start in the circle and tossed 4 2/3 scoreless innings, but Stephens got an unearned run in the fifth, then tacked on three more (two unearned) in the sixth.

In game two, Union fell 7-2 to Hart County after Madeline Tanner gave her team a 1-0 lead with a base hit in the second.

The Lady Bulldogs tied things up in the second, then blew things open with five runs in the third.

Union's next game will be a region contest in the season opener when North Hall pays Blairsville a visit on Aug. 10.

First pitch is scheduled for 6 p.m.



Katelynn Hodges fires home vs Hart County. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Jillian Lawn winds and delivers at vs Stephens County on Thursday. Photo/Todd Forrest



Pitcher Aubree Pack got the start vs Hart County. Photo/Todd Forrest



Junior Bailey Rayfield with a hit vs White County on Wednesday. Photo/Todd Forrest

## Union County's Tom Wilson retires from coaching after 58 years

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Charleston, SC - Tom Wilson, a Union County High School graduate and former coach, is hanging up his whistle after six decades on the sidelines.

A 1955 UCHS graduate, Wilson was a member of the first Panthers basketball team to win a Region Tournament and advance to the stateplayoffs under head coach James Butterworth.

Union drew undefeated Lanier County in the first game and came up short, 69-66. Lanier went on to finish the season 37-0 despite playing its home games on an auditorium stage because the school didn't have a gymnasium.

After attending Young Harris College and the University of Georgia, Wilson returned to Union County in 1969 where he coached football and baseball. But it was his girls basketball teams from 1970-1974 (when girls only played 3-on-3) that made him a coaching icon in North Georgia.

During the 1969-70 season, Wilson led the Lady Panthers to their first ever victory in the state playoffs when they defeated Greene County 67-49.

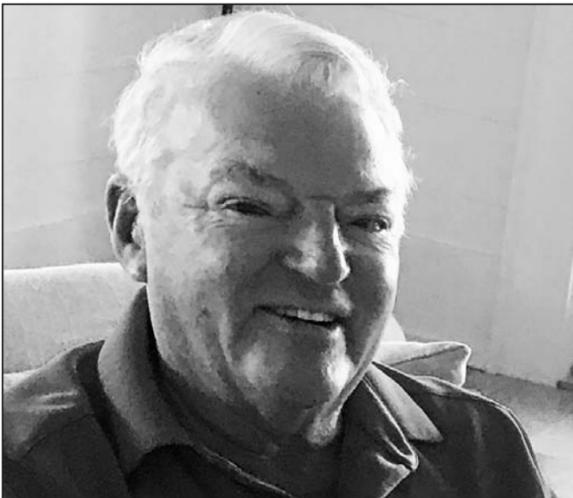
The win over Greene sent Union to Macon for the Elite 8, where they fell to Southeast Bulloch 46-39.

A year later UCHS suffered from a tough draw in the first round - the eventual state champs, Montgomery County.

Wilson's Lady Panthers held their own but fell in a grind-it-out, 25-21 low scoring affair to Montgomery, who didn't face a tougher opponent for the remainder of the post-season.

Their 4-point win over Union was the closest contest of the tournament after they went on to dominate the championship game by a score of 36-19.

In 1971-72, the Lady Panthers were on a mission and returned to state and proceeded to rout Macon County 37-19 in round one, and Bowdon 46-23



1955 UCHS graduate Tom Wilson turned 80 years young in May.

to advance to the program's first Final Four.

Standing between Union and a trip to the finals was the defending champs, Montgomery County.

Once again, Montgomery held off Union County by four (42-38) and went on to win its second straight title by 22 points.

Each of Montgomery's wins in the 1972 State Tournament were by 15 points or more - with the exception of Wilson's Lady Panthers.

During Wilson's final season of 1973, Union and Towns County both reached State and were on a collision course to meet again but both squads were eliminated in the Elite 8.

Union took care of Sparta 57-38 in round one but suffered a 32-31 heartbreaking loss to Wheeler.

Under Wilson, the Lady Panthers went 98-19 with two region titles during his four years stretch of 1969-70 though 1972-73.

Union County's girls went on to reach the Final Four in 1974 under new coach Mickey Birchfield but only advanced to state one more time (1976) during the decade of the 1970s.

Wilson's next coaching gig sent him to South Carolina, where he's remained ever since, and after turning 80 in May, he decided to call it a career.

When it was all said and done, Wilson tallied 45 years

of coaching in football and 30 years in basketball. He also coached baseball (4 years), golf (27 years) and track (16 years) throughout his career.

Most recently, Wilson was the golf coach at Fort Dorchester, SC - a position he held for 17 years.

His son, Mike, is the former golf coach at Charleston Southern University and is now coaching golf at the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

While being nearly 40 years removed from coaching at UCHS, Wilson still has a connection to the Union County coaching tree. Wilson's nephew is Lady Panthers soccer coach Tim Hunter. And just like his uncle, Hunter has had success in multiple sports - taking both the boys and girls soccer teams to state as recently as 2016.

Hunter also led the boys basketball team to the state playoffs in 2009 - ending a six year absence.

### MUSA Registration

Mountain United Soccer Association's fall soccer registration is open for boys and girls ages 4-16.

You may register online at [www.mountainsoccer.org](http://www.mountainsoccer.org). Registration deadline is Aug. 9. Players registered after deadline will incur a late fee and will be placed on roster waiting list.

Volunteer coaches also are needed. Questions: email: [musa.soccer@gmail.com](mailto:musa.soccer@gmail.com)



Mary Wischmeyer (14) is greeted a home plate after her two-run homer gave Union County a 4-1 lead over Gilmer County on Wednesday. Photo/Todd Forrest