

Sports

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Garrett brings new philosophy to a hungry Lady Panthers squad

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

For the first time since 2011, the Lady Panthers will be under the direction of a new head coach as Corey Garrett takes over a Union County squad that returns four starters, led by two-time All-Region selection Bailey Daniel.

Last season the Lady Panthers (12-14, 4-8) failed to reach the state tournament for the first time in 7 years following a 2-8 start in region play (one win came by forfeit over GAC). Relying heavily on freshmen and sophomores, the Lady Panthers went through some early growing pains but closed with wins over Lumpkin County and at Dawson County.

Unfortunately, Union made an early departure from the postseason when Dawson got revenge a week later to halt the Lady Panthers' postseason streak at six years.

Returning alongside the aforementioned Daniel is a two-year starter in junior Adeline Dockey, who is perhaps the most versatile player on the roster. The frontcourt will be anchored by double-double machine Kait McCarter. The sophomore post was an All-Region selection as a freshman last season after proving herself a steady scorer and rebounder.

Fellow sophomore Brooke Dockey, a part-time starter at guard last season was also a significant contributor as a freshman.

Meanwhile, sophomores



Senior Bailey Daniel (left) returns after leading the team in scoring the last two seasons. Sophomore Kait McCarter (right) was all-region as a freshman last year. Photo/Todd Forrest

Mary Wischmeyer, Andelin Hill and Megan Bright each provided a glimpse of their bright futures by logging quality minutes as freshmen. Junior Jordan Rogers, another vital member of last year's rotation, returns following a solid sophomore season, as does senior Grace Wischmeyer and junior Maddie Sutton. A new face that could make an impact on varsity is sophomore Krysten Hodges, who arrived this year and is the sister of UC softball's Katelynn Hodges.

Union County travels to Hayesville, NC on Tuesday for a scrimmage contest at 5 p.m. Garrett is currently installing a brand new offensive and defensive scheme so Tuesday

will provide the first glimpse at the progress.

"In the summer we made the switch to more of a man-to-man defense so we're hoping (our defense) looks the way we think it can," Garrett said. "We've also put in a completely new offense so we're not trying to be too flashy at this point. We just want to run our basic stuff and be good at that before we branch out."

According to Garrett, Grace Wischmeyer and Sutton will not participate in Tuesday's scrimmage due to injury. Their status for the season remains uncertain but Garrett expects to learn more later this week.

Friday the season gets underway with Gilmer County

at 7 p.m. Next Tuesday, Nov. 21, Union County visits Towns County at 7 p.m. prior to taking a week off for Thanksgiving.

After the holiday, Union concludes the month of November with a trip to Rabun County for a 6 p.m. tip-off.

"Our main focus (early in the season) is just getting ready for region play," Garrett said. "We want to make sure we're good at the basics. We put in some dribble-drive offense during the summer and we're hoping to see that develop more."

"Defensively, our girls have never played man (defense) and it's a new concept to them but they've been looking pretty good."



Junior Adeline Dockey is due for a breakout year. Photo/Todd Forrest

Jones to lean heavily on experience as Panthers return four starters

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Union County basketball opens its 2017-18 campaign this week with a Tuesday scrimmage at Hayesville, NC, followed by the season-opener on Friday when the Panthers welcome Gilmer County.

Head Coach Casey Jones, who begins his fifth year at the helm, is looking for a postseason berth after missing out on the state tournament for the first time during his tenure following a disappointing finish to 2016-17.

"We're ready to get going," Jones said. "This is always an exciting time of year when the games roll around. We have a good group of guys this year and I'm looking forward to getting started."

The Panthers return four starters off last year's 10-16 squad that opened the season without junior guard Candler Colwell, then finished the year without its leading scorer, senior Lawson Baenninger.

After Baenninger's injury, Union fell at eventual region champ East Hall on Jan. 3 but rebounded off four straight wins, including a 59-56 victory over Dawson County to improve to 9-9 on the year. A loss to region runner-up Greater Atlanta Christian and a 19-point drubbing of Hayesville had the Panthers sitting at 10-10 on January 21.

A 66-54 loss at North Hall was followed by a heart-breaking 70-68 loss to East Hall where Union was unable to survive a frantic Viking rally in the final minute.



Union County seniors Crawford Colwell (left), RJ Banton (top right), and Candler Colwell (bottom right). Photos by Todd Forrest

The Panthers weren't the quite same from then on.

Union would lose its next four games – including back-to-back losses to Dawson County, the second being a season-ending loss in the first round of the Region 7-AAA Tournament – to close the season on a six-game skid.

The last month of the season wasn't all doom-and-gloom, however, as Jones dis-

covered two future stars in freshmen Pierson Allison and Sawyer Drake – who both played in an integral role in several Panther victories.

Now sophomores, Allison and Drake will be joined by a pair of three-year starters in seniors Crawford Colwell (All-Region last year) and Candler Colwell. Seniors RJ Banton and Cole Davis also return after moving into the starting

lineup last season. With one of his most experienced teams to date, Jones has been able to spend his practices fine-tuning his squad into a well-oiled machine, instead of installing a new system.

"We haven't put in anything new this year, which wasn't the case last year," Jones said. "We're still 1-3-1 on defense and nothing's really changed so the main thing is



Union County seniors Crawford Colwell (left), RJ Banton (top right), and Candler Colwell (bottom right). Photos by Todd Forrest

just execution."

Other players to watch this season are Tim Murphy, Britt Waller, Coleson Daniel and Sawyer Brey, who should provide Union County with size and depth, something that is sorely needed according to Jones.

Returning to the hardwood this year is senior guard Patrick Baggett, whose 3-point shooting provided the Panthers

a spark off the bench during his sophomore season.

"We have some freshmen this year that I really like but I don't know if any of them will be ready to play any varsity," Jones said.

Senior Cole Wright, a part-time starter last year is not playing, nor is Riley Barnett and Marty Kronz – both came off the bench as juniors last season.

Tuesday's scrimmage at Hayesville will get underway at 5 p.m. with the Lady Panthers game. As for the guys, Jones hopes the game serves as learning experience for his team.

"Tuesday is a chance to see what we can do and what we can do better," Jones said. "Like I said, we haven't added anything new so I'm hoping we can just go out and execute and take care of the basketball."

On Friday, Union will host Gilmer, who the Panthers narrowly defeated twice last season. The following Tuesday, Nov. 21, Union County visits Towns County, looking to avoid the first three-game losing streak to the Indians in 22 years.

Region play begins Dec. 5 with a trip to Fannin County. On Dec. 8, the Panthers will host Rabun County, a former region rival.

"We've got some experience but we're kind of small," Jones added. "To be successful we're going to have to shoot it from the outside, try to score on the run as much as we can, and play good defense."

"The chemistry is good, we have experience and we have guys who can lead us. Of course it helps when you have a pair of 3-year starters."

Union County High School and Middle School Hawaiian Luau Swim Meet results

On Saturday, Nov. 4, UCHS and UCMS Mens and Womens Panther Swim Teams journeyed to the annual Tallulah Falls Hawaiian Luau swim meet.

It was an extremely competitive meet with many of our swimmers setting personal and/or school records. Their next meet is Saturday, Nov. 11 where they will again take to the waters to make Union County Athletes proud once more. Below are the results for their most recent competition:

Team Scores:
Combined High School – 9th Place overall; Mens High School Team Rankings – 6th Place overall; Womens High School Team Rankings – 10th Place overall.

Combined Middle School – 7th Place overall;

Boys Middle School Team Rankings – 6th Place overall; Girls Middle School Team Rankings – 9th Place overall.

UCHS Mens Swim:

Men 200 Yard Medley Relay High School (17) - 8th Place; Tyler Harkins, Luke Gambrell, Aidan Francis, Alden Wilkes.

Men 200 Yard Freestyle High School (8) - Tyler Harkins (JR) - 6th Place.

Men 200 Yard IM High School (12) - Aidan Francis (SR) - 7th Place; Alden Wilkes (FR) - 8th Place.

Men 50 Yard Freestyle High School (61) - Ean Harkins (JR) - 12th Place; Grayson Blocker (JR) - 16th Place; Nathanael Allison (SO) - 36th Place.

Men 100 Yard Butterfly High School (12) - Alden Wilkes (FR) - 6th Place.

Men 100 Yard Freestyle High School (46) - Ean Harkins (JR) - 9th Place; Grayson Blocker (JR) - 10th Place.

Men 200 Yard Freestyle Relay High School (17) - 4th Place; Luke Gambrell, Tyler Harkins, Alden Wilkes, Aidan Francis.

Men 100 Yard Backstroke High School (21) - Nathanael Allison (SO) - 18th Place; Tyler Harkins (JR) - 20th Place.

Men 100 Yard Breaststroke High School (28) - Aidan Francis (SR) - 4th Place.

UCHS Womens Swim:

Women 200 Yard IM High School (10) - Kaiya Wilkes (JR) - 4th Place.

Women 50 Yard Freestyle High School (50) - Kaiya Wilkes (JR) - 5th Place; Grace Weldon (SO) - 8th

Place; Kindie Kolb (JR) - 23rd Place; Hannah Patterson (FR) - 44th Place.

Women 200 Yard Freestyle Relay High School (16) - 8th Place; Kaiya Wilkes, Hannah Patterson, Kindie Kolb, Grace Weldon.

Women 100 Yard Backstroke High School (39) - 5th Place; Hannah Patterson (FR) - 37th Place.

Women 100 Yard Breaststroke High School (30) - Kindie Kolb (JR) - 17th Place.

UCMS Boys Swim:

Boys 200 Yard Medley Relay Middle School (16) - 4th Place; Liam Smith, Hunter White, Preston Perren, Michael Leird.

Boys 100 Yard IM Middle School (19) - Michael Leird - 4th Place; Liam Smith

- 12th Place.

Boys 50 Yard Freestyle Middle School (42) - Liam Smith - 5th Place; Preston Perren - 16th Place; Tate Murphy - 19th Place; Daniel Herrera - 25th Place.

Boys 50 Yard Butterfly Middle School (15) - Hunter White - 3rd Place (**New UCMS Record**).

Boys 100 Yard Freestyle Middle School (28) - Hunter White - 1st Place.

Boys 200 Yard Freestyle Relay Middle School (15) - 3rd Place; Michael Leird, Liam Smith, Preston Perren, Hunter White.

Boys 50 Yard Backstroke Middle School (26) - Preston Perren - 9th Place; Tate Murphy - 12th Place; Daniel Herrera - 22nd Place.

Boys 50 Yard Breaststroke Middle School (28) -

Michael Leird - 4th Place.

UCMS Girls Swim:
Girls 100 Yard IM Middle School (16) - Courtney Foster - 2nd Place.

Girls 50 Yard Freestyle Middle School (53) - Scarlett Murphy - 28th Place; Ryan Barnett - 29th Place; Jewell Massey - 36th Place; Dakota Stanger - 39th Place.

Girls 200 Yard Freestyle Relay Middle School (19) - 12th Place; Scarlett Murphy, Dakota Stanger, Ryan Barnett, Courtney Foster.

Girls 50 Yard Backstroke Middle School (38) - Scarlett Murphy - 24th Place; Ryan Barnett - 26th Place; Jewell Massey - 28th Place; Dakota Stanger - 33rd Place.

Girls 50 Yard Breaststroke Middle School (26) - Courtney Foster - 7th Place.