

# Sports

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## Coyne electrifies with Senior Night triple-double

Rabun County narrowly escapes Blairsville on Friday but not without controversy

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
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Senior Dylan Coyne had a night he will never forget.

With a date to prom secured just moments before tip, the Union County forward put up career highs of 22 points and 10 assists, to go along with 11 rebounds.

The triple-double was the first by a Panther since 2005 when Derek "Shorty" Hughes accomplished the feat with double digit points, rebounds, and steals.

Before the Panthers (13-8, 3-2) went on to blast Murphy, NC, 79-41 on Saturday, Coyne took a leap of faith during the Senior Night ceremonies after the Lady Panthers' game.

While his bio was being read over the public address system, he included a prom invitation to fellow senior basketball star Lauren Zollinger.

"Dylan would like to take this opportunity to ask Lauren if she would give him the honor of taking her to prom," read Public Address Announcer Tim Hunter.

Zollinger immediately nodded, accepting the invite. Coyne responded with a giant smile and a sigh of relief. He went on to play the game of his life.

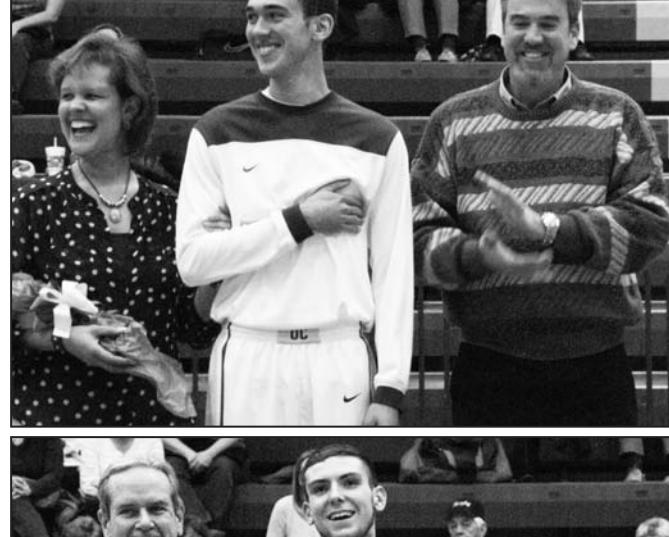
With senior Grant Schuette joining Coyne in the starting lineup, Union raced out to a 19-11 lead after a quarter and was never threatened again. Coyne knocked down two 15-foot jumpers during a 10-point opening frame.

He would then take on the roll of distributor for the remainder of the half, feeding junior Hunter Hughes, who lit up the Bulldogs for 16 points in the second frame as the Panthers opened up a 41-19 advantage at the break.

Coyne would connect on a baseline jumper in the quarter for 12 points at the intermission while Hughes led the way with 18 total points.

Coyne and Hughes would continue to pace the Union County onslaught, combining for 9 points in the third and the Panthers stretched their lead to 60-27.

Coyne came up with one of his 5 steals on the night and drew an intentional foul just 39 seconds into the fourth. He connected on both shots from the stripe - setting a new career



**Seniors with family.** Top - (L-R) Dylan Coyne and Eliyah Ryals. Bottom: Grant Schuette and Manager Jaron Whitmore. Photos/Todd Forrest



sophomore posts Chase Shook and Logan Baker added six and four points respectively, each a career best.

Tyler Odom and Matthew Wasko finished with 4 points each and Thomas Danek had 3 points.

On a side note, sophomore guard Andrew Brown placed a bet with Coyne before the season. The terms of the wager were that if Coyne ever recorded a triple-double, Brown would shave his head. If Coyne collects, Brown should be sporting a new 'do' on Tuesday when Riverside comes to town at 6 p.m. or at Wednesday's make-up game at home with Jefferson, also at 6 p.m.

"I told the guys that when they are 50 years old, if God allows them to live that long, and I hope he does, they will be talking about this night," Coach Jones said. "Dylan is going to be talking about that behind the back pass he threw to Grant."

Hughes was just a point away from matching his career high as the junior guard poured in 23 points, but sat for most of the mercy-rule shortened fourth quarter. Meanwhile,

The night before saw plenty of action but not the kind that Panther

fans wanted to see. Union allowed a putback with 3 seconds to play and fell 66-64 to Rabun.

Despite the confusion, Hamby got his much overdue chance at the line and connected on both shots of the 1-and-1, putting the Panthers ahead 64-61 with 22 seconds, no, check that, 28 seconds on the clock.

It was the same song and dance on Rabun's next offensive possession when the Wildcats were awarded another 3-point play when it appeared from some angles that the Union players were getting out of the way, willing to surrender the lay up with a 3-point lead.

Instead, another Rabun free throw tied the game with 20 seconds left. From that point on, the Panthers made three costly mistakes and suffered the consequences.

Union wasted its chance at holding for the last shot when Rabun forced the Panthers to fire a pass over everyone's head, losing possession.

Then two offensive rebounds allowed on the final possession let the Cats get three shots at the game winner, and the third one dropped with 3 seconds to play.

Odom's full court pass to Hughes was on the money and the 22-footer at the buzzer nearly banked in, but the ball bounced off the backboard and then the front of the rim.

Coyne led the Panthers with 14 points and Odom scored 12 despite battling foul trouble. Hughes and Hamby added 9 points each, Arnick had 8 points, Schuette ended up with 6, while Danek, Shook, and freshman Lawson Baenninger had two each.

"It was a heartbreaker," Coach Jones said. "But I think we grew from it and will make us that tougher in the playoffs. I would take my guys over any team in the Region. We can still finish anywhere 3rd through 5th but I like our chances against anyone."

## Lady Panthers regroup on Senior Night after 17-point loss to Rabun

By Todd Forrest  
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On Saturday night, Union County honored its seniors and the Lady Panthers snapped a two-game skid and hopefully corrected course after dropping three-of-four.

The Lady Panthers jumped all over Murphy, NC in the early going and held off the gritty Lady Bulldog squad 53-41.

Union quickly erased an ugly loss to Rabun the night before and raced out to a 19-6 lead over Murphy after a quarter of play.

Juniors Lisa Nalaschi and Brooke Maddox also had to put tough individual performances from Friday in their rear views, and they did, scoring 5 and 6 points respectively in the first quarter.

The Lady Panthers would open the second frame with an 8-4 stretch when a Kaitlyn Day three made it 27-10 with 3:09 left before the half. But the Lady Bulldogs had plenty of fight left in them as they trimmed the Union lead to 29-16, before a free-throw by sophomore Layne Colwell made it 30-16 at the break.

An 11-2 run to open the third by the Lady Panthers and the game was showing all the major symptoms of a blowout, but again, Murphy responded - outscoring Union 8-2 over the final 4:10 of the third quarter. Entering the fourth, Union was nursing a comfortable 15-point margin.

On three separate occasions Murphy got within 12 but each



**Seniors with family.** Top - (L-R) Allie Stroman and Lauren Zollinger. Bottom: Madison Rich and Cheerleader Samantha Gentry. Photos/Todd Forrest



year overcoming injury, and she has done it."

Senior Madison Rich added 2 points and senior Allie Stroman grabbed 2 boards.

"Madison and Allie are al-

ways there and are always reliable," Coach Tucker said. "Both of them will do whatever is asked and both are good ball players. They can (both) shoot, defend, handle the ball, and always give 100 percent."

On Friday night, Union County found themselves up double figures on Rabun County once again. This time the Lady Cats stormed passed and never took their foot off the accelerator, taking a 55-38 victory back to Clayton.

The Lady Panthers held an early 20-9 advantage but Rabun put the clamps down, holding the Union offense without a field goal for the next 13:06.

When Day connected on the Lady Panthers first basket since the first quarter, her team was down 37-26 with 3:30 left in the third. She would hit another runner in the lane keeping Union within 14 points but Rabun eventually put things away - opening up a 19-point fourth quarter lead.

"Our girls don't like contact and Rabun is a physical team," Coach Tucker said. "Then when Brooke (Maddox) got into foul trouble (4th foul with 4:29 left in the third) we just came apart."

Union still has an outside shot at first but would need a lot of help. The Lady Panthers can guarantee themselves a Top 2 spot in the Region 8-AA Tournament by simply winning out.

Union needs to knock off Jefferson on Wednesday then travel to Greene County on Saturday and take care of business to lock up the No. 2 seed.

A loss in both could drop the Lady Panthers to fourth while a split will likely result in a No. 3 seed in next week's tournament.

## Stancil, Eigel reach Sectionals; Floyd an alternate

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
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Norcross - Three Union County wrestlers will be moving on to the next round beginning in Dublin on Friday.

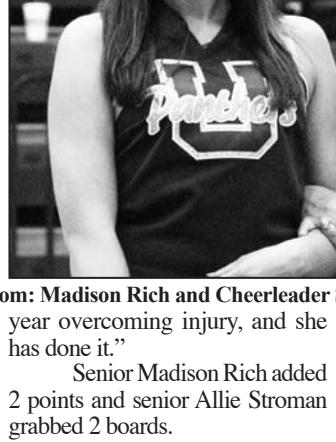
Seniors Chase Stancil and Jonathan Floyd and sophomore Justin Eigel will compete in the State Sectionals this weekend after strong showings at the Area 4-AA Tournament last weekend.

Stancil placed fourth at 138 pounds and Eigel, also fourth at 170 pounds. Floyd placed fifth in the 220-pound division and will make the trip as an alternate. There is a possibility that Floyd could see action with Greater Atlanta Christian suffering an injury to their 220-pound wrestler.

"This is great for Chase and Jon because they are two of our seniors and they wanted to finish



**Seniors with family.** Top - (L-R) Allie Stroman and Lauren Zollinger. Bottom: Madison Rich and Cheerleader Samantha Gentry. Photos/Todd Forrest



11 wrestlers returning next year with our largest 8th grade class coming up. Four of our boys that represented us were just freshmen while two were sophomores, and two were juniors. We should have our first full team next year and every wrestler on the team will have at least two years experience as well. This will make a huge difference."

In Blairsville, Cott Beverage

is our community host for the soccer fields. In Hiawassee, the fields at the Towns County Fairgrounds are utilized through the cooperation of the local recreation department. The league is grateful for their commitment and support.

The spring season will begin in early March. Anyone who is interested in playing needs to register promptly. In some cases space is limited.

MUSA is a volunteer run

## MUSA Spring Registration

Mountain United Soccer Association is ready for spring soccer.

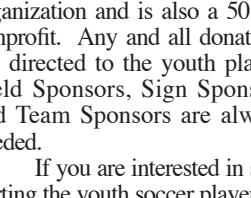
Registrations are currently being accepted for age groups U6-U14. This season we are offering online registration at [www.mountainsoccer.org](http://www.mountainsoccer.org). Registration forms are also available on the website, to print and mail in. The deadline to register is Feb. 15th.

In Blairsville, Cott Beverage

organization and is also a 501C3 nonprofit. Any and all donations are directed to the youth player. Field Sponsors, Sign Sponsors and Team Sponsors are always needed.

If you are interested in supporting the youth soccer players in our community through sponsorship and/or donation, please contact the association.

For additional info contact the league at 706-994-4351, musa.soccer@gmail.com or visit us on the web at [www.mountainsoccer.org](http://www.mountainsoccer.org).



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