

Wrestlers take down stereotypes, and competition

By Todd Forrest
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Union County High School senior Alyssa Sinkler and junior Macy Hayes are already making waves in the Tri-State area and Union County Wrestling Coach Michael Smith-Foot is hoping his two local trend-setters will prove that wrestling isn't just a guy thing.

Smith-Foot has coached wrestling for 17 and has yet to have a girl complete the entire season.

Until now, Sinkler has competed at the varsity level for Union County at 128, 132, and 136 pounds and competed at the Area Tournament in the 132-pound weight class.

Meanwhile, Hayes is hoping that a year of experience will pay off and she can earn a full-time varsity position in 2013-14.

"I've always wanted to try it and I'm really competitive," Hayes said. "I want to come back next year and earn a varsity spot."

"She can do it," Smith-Foot said. "I think it's cool because there are a lot of parents and coaches that don't approve of girls wrestling at all. I've never been that way. I feel if you are tough enough to come out then you should. Once they come out they have to stop being girls. When they're on the mat, they are just wrestlers. You have to convince the rest of the team of that first or you will have issues. But once you



Macy Hayes



Alyssa Sinkler

get through that, then they start wrestling hard and truly work with them."

Although, anyone who has wrestled Sinkler knows that she is the real deal. And don't even think about going easy on her because she's a girl.

"Whenever a guy thinks he's going to take it easy on the mat, I just slap him around a little bit and tell him to wrestle me like a dude."

"If they wrestle her more than once, you'll notice the second time that the boys will wrestle them much harder because they are afraid they are going to lose," Smith-Foot said. "Since our program has just started we're hoping that this could become a tradition. We have a girl wrestler down at the middle school. At one point, she had five pins in a row and has won at least 11

matches this year. We've heard through the grapevine that we have more girls who are interested."

Open Mat days are an excellent opportunity to discover if wrestling is your cup of tea and is exactly how Sinkler discovered the sport.

"I had a friend who wrestled last year and he asked Coach Byers how he felt about a girl coming to an Open Mat, and he said, 'bring her out' so I came out."

Smith-Foot is hoping that Union County and other schools around North Georgia can continue to expand the sport to anyone interested in hitting the mat.

"I think what's going to happen in the state of Georgia, if they keep the weight classes under 125 pounds, you're going to see mostly girls in the future wrestling those lighter

weight classes," he said. "We were at the Towns County tournament and there were eight girls wrestling. Pickens County, White County, and Rabun County also have girl wrestlers so you are seeing it more and more. It's not only the lighter weight classes. There is a girl at White County Middle School who wrestles at 285 pounds and she is tough."

Sinkler was never fortunate enough to grapple with another girl, but Hayes is hoping to get that opportunity soon.

"I can't wait until I get to wrestle another girl," said Hayes, chomping at the bit.

The high school and middle school programs hope to work with the Union County Recreation Department to begin a youth league, in which Smith-Foot, Sinkler, and Hayes would all love to lend a helping hand in developing Union County's future wrestling stars.

"If we can get girls at 6 and 7 years old then they definitely can be competitive," Smith-Foot said. "I've seen girls in other states make it to the state tournament and were actually one match away from placing at 106 pounds. In Alaska, they have just crowned their first female state champion at 106 pounds, in an all boys division."

"I will always remember my first tournament and being on the mat for the first time and all the guys cheering me on," Sinkler added. "I've had a blast this season and wish I could come back."

Joe Collins

Tips from the Range

Last week we looked at how the turn affects the golf swing and its importance in keeping the core of the body rotating around the spine. This gives you a better chance of making solid contact at impact which will promote consistency and accuracy. Another huge benefit in turning correctly is that it utilizes the larger muscles in the back, chest and legs. The activation of these larger muscle groups is crucial in achieving optimum distance and that is something many of us strive for, more distance.

It is not uncommon these days to see a tour player crush a drive 350 yards or smoke a 5-iron 225 yards or hit a wedge from 150 yards. Distance on average is longer than in years past and some of this increase is due in part to the enhancement of today's equipment but mostly it is because long hitters have learned which body motions provide the most power.

It is not very hard to pick up 10 or 15 yards overall but to increase your drives and irons by 30 to 50 yards; you will need to change your swing to produce a faster swing speed with more solid impact. Golf clubs have sweet spots in the center of the face and you need to hit that sweet spot perfectly to gain true distance.

Not everyone will hit mammoth drives but all golfers can increase their average distances even if they are seeing that distance decline with age. Swing speeds will typically slow as we become more "mature" but you can still maximize the swing you have by swinging correctly.

Believe it or not but true distance is directly related to accuracy. It is amazing how accurate tour players can be when they also hit it so far. If you utilize your body correctly to maximize distance, it also produces proper accuracy because the swing path is typically correct with minimum hand action. Overactive hands will destroy distance and accuracy so keep the hands quiet until just before impact.

The next thing we need to focus on when trying to hit the ball farther is club head speed through impact. It is vital that the swing speed be at its fastest just before impact with the maximum speed of the club at the point of contact with the ball.

This is what we call acceleration. The club picks up speed on the way down out of the top just the same as a child does when going down a slide. Slow at the top and fast at the bottom. Don't throw the hands at the ball from the top of the arc but let the body generate arm speed on the downswing.

Weight transfer in conjunction with your turn is the next concern you need to have to make sure the club accelerates on the downswing. This is known as timing and it is also very important in gaining distance. You must transfer your weight from the back foot to the front foot as you turn around the spine on the downswing.

The key to this is re-aligning the arms and the center of the chest on the downswing. By the time the arms move from the top of the arc to half the distance from the top to impact, the arms have to be in front of the energy you built up through the weight transfer.

Check out Phil Mickelson's swing on YouTube to see one of the best weight transfers in professional golf. His leg drive is amazing and creates a tremendous amount of energy. He really depends on his timing to maximize his distance and his arm speed out of the top is impressive. This is why he hits it so far. His arms are in tune with his weight transfer to the front foot and they get back in front of his chest at the right time in the downswing.

To correctly and efficiently produce good timing and therefore proper power; you must look at your leg drive during the weight transfer. The legs must be active to increase swing speed and produce more distance in your shots. The downswing starts in the feet and works its way up through the legs and into the arms with the hands pouring on the coal at the very last second before impact.

A golfing buddy of mine Chris Robbins at Butternut Creek Golf Course has some of the best hand action you will see and believe me when I tell you that he hits it a country mile. If you play "The Nut" you may see him, check out how fast his hands are through the ball as they follow his weight transfer.

Adding distance to your ball flight is very difficult, it will not lie to you. But you can gain distance by working on your turn in conjunction with a proper weight transfer. Allow your legs to become more active and use your balance and club positions to enhance your results.

Don't be afraid to move on the ball just remember to keep the top of your spine behind impact. You can always tone things down and stay more still after you develop some feel for moving the weight correctly. Use the hip rotation to clear a path for the upper body and try and keep the club in front of yourself on the downswing. These actions activate the larger muscle groups and this in turn will increase your club head speed.

Remember that practice really will help your next round so get out and work on your game.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

Webb stays home; will run cross country at YHC

By Todd Forrest
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The reigning 8-AA Boys Cross Country champion will stay home as he signed a letter of intent to Young Harris College last week.

Surrounded by family, friends, coaches, and teammates, Webb was all smiles as he signed his name on the dotted line.

In November, Webb left little doubt as to who the best in Region 8-AA is during the boys meet, as the senior opened up a 10-second lead after the first lap, and continued to pull away for a time of 17:09 - 35 seconds ahead of Oglethorpe County's Sid Wightman.

"I wanted to beat Chris Jones' time from when he ran here during the same year he won state," Webb said after the meet. "That was my goal and I beat his time by a few seconds."

After finishing fifth at the State Meet in Carrollton a week later, Webb said that his future plans were to someday coach Cross Country. When asked if his aspirations had changed since that morning back in November, Webb held firm.



Union County senior Jeremy Webb with family, coaches, and teammates at last week's signing. The Region 8-AA Champion and State top-five will run cross country at Young Harris. Photo/Todd Forrest

"I'm still hoping to coach some day at the high school or collegiate level," he said. "I'm majoring in Physical Education."

Webb also sees a program on the rise when he looks at Young Harris' Cross Country program.

"They are NCAA Division II now," he said. "They

are new to it and are doing very well with it and competing very well."

Webb chose Young Harris over Oglethorpe College and North Georgia.

"Those two schools didn't seem as committed as Young Harris"

As Webb enters Young Harris in the summer he is look-

ing to make the team early in his career, then leave his mark on the program before getting his diploma.

"I would like to make the Top 10 on the team during my first year and that will be a lot of hard work," he said. "But when I finish at Young Harris, I would like to make an impact, and just be remembered."

Mountain Gymnastics, YHC team up for cheer camp



On the morning of Saturday, Feb. 16th, Blairsville's Mountain Gymnastics Center welcomed the Young Harris College Cheer Team and its coaching staff to host a three-hour cheer camp. A big thank you goes out to the YHC Cheer team and the Mountain Gymnastics Center for hosting this wonderful event. Photo/Todd Forrest

Butternut Creek Ladies Golf Association first play day March 14

Attention ladies! Can friendships be made on the golf course? Yes!

Our first seasonal play day game starts on Thursday, March 14, 2013 with a tee time at 10 AM - please be there at 9 AM for this first game to fill out the Membership Forms for 2013, have a short introductory meeting and then register to play golf. We will meet on the first level down the hall in the first room on the left of the Community Club House. If you are unable to join us on our first day of play, we will be playing each Thursday through October 2013.

If you have any questions or would like to have more information, please call Lilly Adams, Tournament Chairperson, at 706-745-2725 or 706-781-4529.

We enjoy good friendship and have lots of fun competing with a nice group of ladies. Come join us - we look forward to seeing all lady golfers! N(FEB27,22)CA



UCHS Band thanks Blimpie's



UCHS Marching Band members receive a check from Blimpie's

Thank you to Blairsville Blimpie's for sponsoring the monthly band day which was held Friday, Feb. 15th.

The Pride of the Mountains Band would also like to thank everyone who stopped by that day and showed their support. We will have another

band day on Friday, March 8th.

Check us out on Facebook at "UCHS Pride of the Mountains Marching Band" and "Blairsville Blimpie's" for updates on future events.

Thank you for your continued support. N(FEB27,21)CA

Panther swimmers thank sponsors, Wellness Center

In thanks for their sponsorship and support, the Union County High School Swim Team presented a signed and framed photograph of the 12-13 Panthers to Union General Wellness Center and its manager Tony Shook.

The swimmers and coach appreciate having access to the beautiful and well-maintained facilities. The members of the Wellness Center have also been overwhelmingly kind in their support of the team.

The team also expressed thanks to UCHS Athletic Directors Ed Rohrbaugh, C.T. Hussion, and Brian Allison for all their efforts over the course of the season. In addition, the team would like to thank Valerie Gautieri, the president

and founder of the UCHS Swim Team Booster Club for her multitude of kindnesses and the time she has given for the team.

The Panthers would also like to thank their sponsors for their generosity:

United Community Bank, Cadence Bank, Women's Health Center, Mountain Valley Pack 'n Ship, Mountain Eye Care.

Thank you also to the faculty of Union County High School, Lee Wheeler, The City of Coral Springs Aquatic Center, Coosa Creek Embroidery, and Domino's Pizza for their help.

Special thanks to Barry Gay for the many hours he has given on behalf of the swimmers.



Valerie Gautieri, Tanner Gay, Lindsey McCann, and Coach Carol Knight present a signed photo of the 2013 Union County High School swim team to the Union County Wellness Center. Photo/Todd Forrest