

Sports

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Panthers to host first round of State for second straight year

By Todd Forrest
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Washington - The Union County Panthers baseball team (18-6, 10-4) slammed Washington-Wilkes twice last week, proving that the Panthers plan on making a habit out of hosting the State Tournament.

Despite replacing three pitchers, and eight players overall entering 2014, the Panthers are back in the top two in 8-AA.

To pull off the feat, all Union had to do is sweep a lowly Washington-Wilkes team, who entered the doubleheader with a 3-17 overall record, and a 2-10 mark within the region.

In the first game, the Panthers used a seven-run second inning to take a commanding 10-0 lead. Junior pitcher Tyler Odom worked five innings, striking out eight, and surrendered one unearned run on three Tiger hits.

Union added another run in the third, and one more during the fourth to take a 12-1 victory in five innings.

In the second contest, sophomore Joseph Mancuso and junior Jake Sisum went deep in a 16-1 win that lasted just three innings.

"It was a huge stress relief to get the bats going early against Washington-Wilkes," Union Head Coach Brandon Bradburn said. "We had three or four balls that were driven in the gaps in the first inning, so I knew we got off the bus with a really good mindset of not trying to hit home runs."



Jake Sisum went deep at Washington-Wilkes The junior is third on the team with a .557 slugging percentage in 2014. Photo/Todd Forrest

Mancuso would strike out seven from the mound in three innings. He allowed three hits and an unearned run.

Mancuso blasted a 3-1 pitch to center for a two-run homer in the first inning. Then Sisum, not to be outdone, sent another 3-1 pitch to the opposite field for a two-run bomb during the third inning.

During that third frame, the Panthers sent 15 hitters to the plate while pounding out 10 runs. Sisum led off the inning with a single before his homerun later in the inning.

The Panthers finished the second game with just nine hits but were aided by four Tiger errors and five walks issued by the Tigers' pitching staff.

None of three Washington-Wilkes pitchers were able to keep Union honest on the base paths as the Panthers stole nine bases. Sophomore Josh Daniel swiped three bags and juniors Jackson Burks and Robert Prunier stole two bases each.

Daniel, Burks, and fellow junior Hunter Hughes were also charged with larceny of second



Sophomore Joseph Mancuso went yard for the fourth time at Washington-Wilkes. He leads the team in Slugging. Photo/Todd Forrest

base during the first game. "It was really good to get playing time for everybody to have that extra bit of work," Coach Bradburn said. "Hopefully nobody is rusty on Friday."

The Panthers will now turn their attention to the State Tournament and their first round opponent Wesleyan, out of Region 6-AA.

The Wolves will visit Blairsville on Friday sporting a 12-13 mark. However, that record is deceiving. Wesleyan competes against three State Championship-caliber squads inside their own

region, and bring a more heavily polished team than the Bowdon squad that Union hosted last year.

"They play three or four times every season against Westminster, Lovett, and GAC along with other big time programs and to say the least, we will have our hands full with them," Coach Bradburn said. "Bowdon had a great offensive team last year, but they were very young at the same time. Youth and inexperience will not be the case for Wesleyan."

The Panthers and Wesleyan had one common opponent this

season in the top-ranked Jefferson Dragons (21-3, 14-0).

The Wolves lost 1-0 at Jefferson back in mid-March, then fell 8-6 to the Dragons at home on April 9th. The Panthers fell 6-4 and 3-1 to Jefferson.

With nine days to prepare for the first round, Coach Bradburn expects practice to be business as usual as they prep for the Wolves.

"Our practice schedule will probably be about the same," Coach Bradburn said. "I am going to make sure we understand the importance of these games, give them scouting reports on Wesleyan, and make sure they are having fun and enjoying these times."

In the meantime, the Panthers can revel in the fact that they're responsible for one of the most successful two-year stretches in the history of Union County baseball. And despite their young roster, these Panthers know they belong in the State Tournament.

"I think our team is very relaxed, in a good way," Coach Bradburn said. "They surprise me all the time with how calm they are in big time situations."

"To host for two straight years is a really nice accomplishment. I think it shows how good our JV program was last season, that these guys could jump right in there without any hesitation. Sure there have been some bumps in the road, but overall we have improved throughout the season."

Union hosts Wesleyan in a Friday doubleheader starting at 4 p.m. Game three will be Saturday if necessary.

Lady Panthers hosting Westminster in first round on Friday

By Todd Forrest
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The Union County Lady Panthers soccer team will host a State playoff game on Friday for the first time in 10 years.

On Wednesday, Union (9-1-2) hosted Fannin in what was essentially a tune-up game before the postseason. The Lady Panthers prevailed 4-1 in a game that saw the youngsters get some quality minutes.

As for Region action, Union punched their ticket into the top four with a win over Rabun County two weeks ago. Then, the Lady Panthers went to Oglethorpe and smacked the Lady Patriots right in the mouth to lock up the No. 2 spot and secure home field in the first round.

Union dropped four unanswered goals on the home team after allowing Oglethorpe a cheap goal in the early going.

"They (Oglethorpe) scored the first goal on a miscue at the back and they had some really good players up front," Union Head Coach Tim Hunter said. "But then we went on a rampage and scored four unanswered to ice the game."

Maddy Morlock got the Lady Panthers' first goal off a feed from Camryn Carter in the 12th minute of the contest to tie things up at 1-1.

"Carter has been huge for us all season," Coach Hunter



Maddy Morlock (#12) flanks sophomore Rachel Vester as she advances up field during a recent Union County Lady Panthers home game. Photo/Todd Forrest

said. "Statistically she hasn't got a lot of the glory but her possessing and holding the midfield has counted in the most important stat, which is winning."

Six minutes later, Alyssa Arnold found Rachel Vester for Union's second goal of the game.

Mary Murphy delivered a goal late in the first half to give her team a comfortable 3-1 advantage going into the

break. The Lady Panther senior found pay-dirt from just outside the penalty area in the 35th minute.

"She hit that goal at a huge moment to kill their momentum going into the half," Coach Hunter said. "I told the girls that if we got one more that it would definitely be enough to ice the game."

Less than two minutes into the second half, Vester put

the Lady Patriots on ice with her second goal of the game.

Morlock added the assist on the Vester goal that spurred the Lady Panthers into a No. 2 seed entering this week's Class AA State Tournament.

For the first time all year, Union County allowed a goal in a game that they won. But the Lady Panther defense refused to buckle late as Oglethorpe threw everything but the kitchen sink



According to her coaches, junior Camryn Carter's success shows up in both the stat sheet and the win-loss record. Photo/Todd Forrest

at Union, trying to creep back into the game.

"Joanna Van Pelt was really ready to play and made sure the whole team knew about it before the game," Coach Hunter said. "She made several huge saves in especially big moments after we had scored and they were trying to work their way into the game."

"Joanna played her best game at the back of her career.

Our seniors also played well in their final Region game. Mary had the big goal, Ema (Herum) played well attacking the ball, and Erin (Innis) fought for the ball in midfield the entire game. Literally one time, as I thought she was going to get into it with one of their midfielders.

"Katie Miller has stepped up her game and played well the

See Lady Panthers, 13A

Woody Gap tennis returns to State after taking fourth in Area

By Todd Forrest
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Millen - Last Thursday, the Woody Gap men's tennis squad traveled to Jenkins County for the Class A State Tournament.

Geography hasn't been on the Falcons' side the past two years as they traveled to Statesboro for the 2013 State Tournament and the 2014 tournament took them south of Augusta.

Jenkins County was the reigning Area 2 Champions, while Woody Gap entered as the No. 4 seed from Area 4.

Jenkins County showed that their Area Championship

was no fluke as they took all three matches from a very good Falcons' team.

In No. 1 Singles action, Eli Gooch dropped his match in straight sets, 0-6 and 2-6. Woody Gap's No. 2 Logan Wood, also fell in straight sets.

In Doubles, Casey McKim and Konnor Sosebee won their first match 6-4 before dropping the next two, 4-6 and 2-6.

"Everyone played well against a strong team," Falcons Tennis Coach Glenn Kough said. "It was an excellent season and it was highlighted by going to State for the second year in a row."

In the Area Tournament in Rome, Woody Gap defeated

Georgia Military College thanks to Eli Gooch coming out on top in a 2.5 hour match.

McKim and Sosebee won their Doubles match, giving the Falcons a win in two of its three matches.

In the second round, Woody Gap fell to eventual Area Champion Trion.

In the Consolation round, the Falcons dropped their match with Gordon Lee.

The Lady Falcons' team of Shelby Tumlin at No. 1 singles, Kaniesha Martin - No. 2 singles, and the doubles team of Nina Sattler and Kianna Martin performed very well at Area but were unable to advance.



Woody Gap High School tennis was represented in the Class A State Tournament for the second consecutive year. They earned the right to compete at State after finishing in the top four in Area.

Union's upstart track team sends five to State later this week

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Norcross - The Union County track starts continue to up the ante at each meet.

Last weekend, five of Union's six runners advanced to the State meet in Albany beginning on Thursday.

The 4x100 relay team of Emma Garrison, Kim Coyne, Amy Cummings, and Allie Stroman shaved an incredible 32 seconds off their time from just a week ago to advance to State.



Garrison will be competing in the 1600M and 800M. She ran a personal best 5:28 in the 1600M event.

Julia Lindsey also ran a personal best time of 13:25 to advance to State in the 3200M race.

Cristian Garcia ran a personal best at Sectionals but fell just short of State.

On April 18th, Union County ran in the Region meet at Jefferson and sent six runners to the State Sectionals.

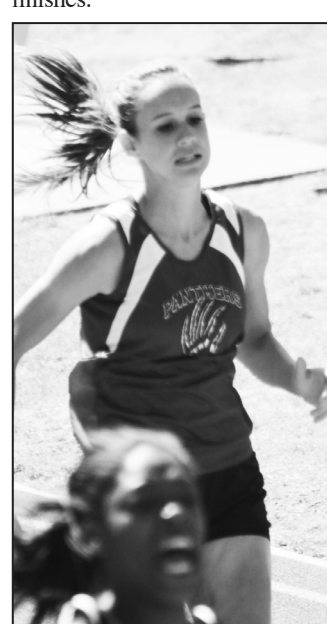
Garrison won her third Region 8-AA Championship and

her first in track by winning the 1600M event. She also placed second in the 800M.

Lindsey placed second in the 3200M and the girls 4x100 relay team of Garrison, Coyne, Cummings, and Stroman came in fourth to advance to Sectionals.

Garcia came in fourth in the 800M to advance to Sectionals.

In early April, the Panthers competed in their first meet of the 2014 season and picked up three first place finishes, five second place finishes, and five third place finishes.



Left to Right: Emma Garrison will compete in two events in Albany this week as will senior runner Allie Stroman (middle) and sophomore Kim Coyne (right).