

Soccer: McCombs, Smith lead Panthers in 6-0 shutout of Temple

Union to visit Putnam County on Tuesday seeking elusive Elite 8 appearance

By Todd Forrest
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Union County junior Parker McCombs scored three straight goals to turn a 1-0 contest into a 4-0 runaway.

From there, freshman Brian Smith put the finishing touches on the Panthers (9-3-1) second-straight opening round victory with a pair of goals in less than 8.5 minutes, the second coming with 4:53 to play.

The win sets up a contest with Putnam County - the third highest ranked public school and eighth overall in Class AA - according to Eurosport.com.

The Eagles are currently riding a 13-game winning streak, which is currently the second longest streak in Class AA, including girls (Wesleyan boys, 18-straight).

Union and Putnam share one common opponent in winless Greene County but not much can be determined by comparing scores since Union "mercy-ruled" Greene by 10 in their one-and-only meeting and Putnam "mercy ruled" them by 10 in two meetings.

Like the Panthers, the Eagles also won handily in their first round matchup, routing 2-win Brooks County 8-0.

However, Union's first round victory came over a 7-win



Juniors Lawson Baenninger (left) and Parker McCombs (right) celebrate McCombs' second goal of the game, making it 4-0. Photo/Todd Forrest

Temple squad.

It took the Panthers 15 minutes to get on the board but senior Jake Waltz put an end to the scoreless tie with a goal inside the penalty box off a Union throw-in.

During the 23rd minute, McCombs went to work, blasting a shot past the Tigers' keeper from 15 yards out, com-

ing off a feed from junior Sam Seiler - who finished with two assists in his first game since suffering an injury and missing three games.

Senior keeper Justin Eigel didn't see much action but the few shots he faced were on-goal. He was finally challenged during the 25th minute but prevented Temple from slicing their deficit



Senior Jake Waltz (left) and freshman Brian Smith (right) during the second half of Union's 6-0 win over Temple. Photo/Todd Forrest

in half with a diving save.

McCombs gave the Panthers a little more breathing room - scoring with just inside five minutes to play before the break. Waltz and Seiler each contributed on the assist.

The Tigers went on the offensive early in the second half but were denied once again by a fully extended, and parallel

to the ground, Eigel

Six minutes into the second half, McCombs completed the hat trick when junior Lawson Baenninger, who was also returning after missing three games due to injury, found him in front of the goal for the Panthers' fourth goal of the game.

Smith struck with 13:22 to play before capping off Union's



Senior Matthew Van Pelt

scoring - with just under five minutes to go - off a feed from McCombs.

Smith and sophomore Sean Dobbins also added one assist each for the Panthers and Eigel recorded his fourth shutout of the year.

Union and Putnam County will get underway at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

Local Scholar-Athlete to represent Georgia at National STEM Congress

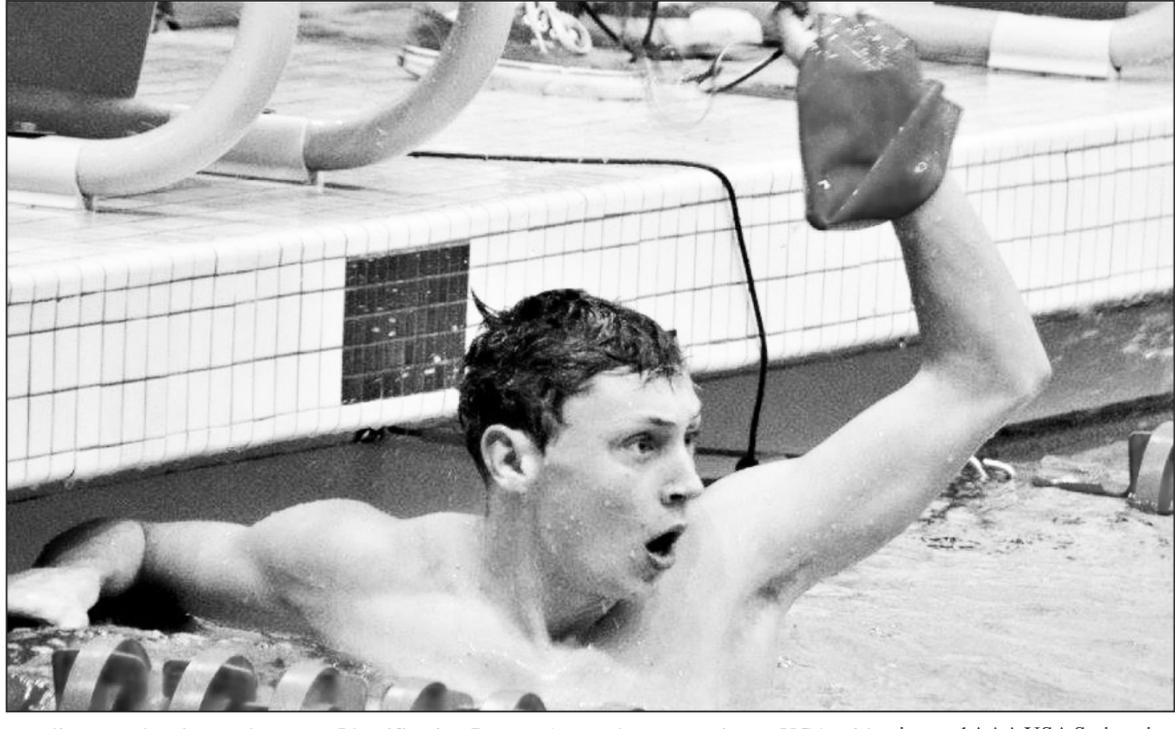
Former Blairsville swimmer, Brendan Bowman will be a national delegate, representing the state of Georgia, at the prestigious 2016 Congress of Future Science and Technology Leaders in Boston, MA on June 29-July 1, 2016.

The 9th grade son of Greg Bowman and Lori Carroll-Bowman of Young Harris received a scholarship to attend the three-day event.

The Congress is a highly-selective national honors program for high school students who are passionate about science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM).

The purpose of the congress is to honor, inspire, motivate and direct the top students in the country who aspire to be scientists and technologists. After the event, the Congress hopes to provide a path, plan and resources to help delegates reach their goals.

Bowman, 14, is a well-rounded scholar, athlete and leader. His academic prowess



was discovered early on when he was chosen to take the ACT in 7th grade for Duke TIP (Tal-

ent Identification Program). The Honor student is also a competitive swimmer,

who now trains at UGA with the Athens Bulldog Swim Club posting State Qualify-

ing and AAA USA Swimming times. He got his swimming start in Blairsville, with the North Georgia Rapids.

He is a Varsity member of the Athens Clarke-Central HS Swimming and Track and Field teams and has broken long-standing school records in both sports in his Freshman year.

After graduation, Bowman, is interested in attending the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. To this end, in 2015, he honed his leadership and mentoring skills at the General Shelton Leader-

ship Challenge at Eastern Carolina University.

He also serves as a decorated member of JROTC and recently won the "The US Army Reserve National Scholar Athlete Award" given to a Varsity athlete for outstanding performance in the classroom, athletic fields, and the community; "The United States Marine Corps Esprit de Corps Award", for scoring the highest on the JROTC Cadet Challenge (physical fitness test); and "The JROTC Academic Excellence Award" for maintaining one of the highest GPA's in his class.

Senior Army Instructor, Lieutenant Colonel David McMickle is in charge of the Clarke-Central JROTC program. He says, "Brendan has the unique ability to join two different, yet extremely important, character traits... athletic prowess with intelligence. He is the total package as a young person and will only get better as he hones his leadership skills. Just a fantastic young cadet to be around."

While in Boston, Bowman will join students from across the country and hear Nobel Laureates and National Medal of Science Winners talk about leading scientific research. He will be given advice from deans of the world's top tech universities; be inspired by fellow teen science prodigies; and learn about cutting-edge advances and the future of science and technology.

NASCAR 2016

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Keselowski is big winner at Talladega

TALLADEGA, Ala.--Brad Keselowski got his second Sprint Cup win of the season Sunday, before an estimated 183,000 cheering fans, that saw only seven undamaged cars cross the finish line.

The other 33 cars had either been knocked out of the race or were badly banged up.

The last of ten cautions came out on lap 183 of the 188-lap race. When racing resumed on lap 185, the leaders were Keselowski, Kurt Busch, Trevor Bayne, and Jamie McMurray. Kurt Busch briefly took over, but after receiving a push from Kyle Busch, Keselowski went back to the front. As the field came out of turn-4 and headed for the finish line on the last lap, Cole Whitt got into the rear of Kevin Harvick, and sent him flying into the outside wall.

NASCAR immediately put out the yellow flag and froze the field, while the leaders were still about 100 yards from the finish line.

"You've got to have a great car and some luck to win here," said Keselowski. "Today, we had both. I've got to thank Kyle. I really needed that push he gave me near the end."

Kyle Busch finished second. "This was a rough day," said Busch. "We were involved in a couple skirmishes, so the way things worked out, we were lucky to finish where we did."

Austin Dillon finished third for his best-ever Cup finish.

"We knew we had a good car, and it handled real good," said Dillon. "But it seems like every time we started moving to the front, somebody would wreck. You have to credit the guys in the pit, because each time they patched it up and got me back on the track."

Jamie McMurray, Chase Elliott, Ty Dillon (Note: Tony Stewart will receive credit for the sixth-place finish, because he started the race in the car), Clint Bowyer, Kurt Busch, Ryan Blaney, and Trevor Bayne were the remaining top-10 finishers.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. was involved in two separate wrecks. The first came during lap 51 while he was switching lanes.

"The car was real tight," he said. "I think the air was kind of taken off my spoiler as I moved down the track, and it got loose."



Brad Keselowski gets big win at Talladega

after Carl Edwards had a right front tire blow out and he ran Junior into the wall, ending his day, and relegating him to a 40th and last place finish.

On lap 95, Jimmie Johnson, Austin Dillon, Chris Buescher, Joey Logano, Carl Edwards, Michael Annett, and David Gilliland brought out the race's fifth caution.

The race's big wreck came on lap 160, and 17 cars were involved. Drivers that were in it included, Paul Menard, Jimmie Johnson, Martin Truex Jr., Austin Dillon, Jamie McMurray, Kyle Larson, Denny Hamlin, Ryan Blaney, Bobby Labonte, Kurt Busch, Ricky Stenhouse Jr., Casey Mears, Greg Biffle, Regan Smith, Ryan Newman, Brian Scott, and A. J. Allmendinger.

Twenty laps later, someone sent Danica Patrick into a spin, and she wound up hitting Matt Kenseth, who went for a wild ride. His No. 20 Joe Gibbs Toyota, rolled three times and flipped once, but he walked away from it.

"I wish I could just run one of these things without getting taken out," said Patrick. "I really don't know what happened. Someone got into my rear quarter panel, and I lost control."

There were only fifteen cars running at the end of the race.

Top-10 Cup leaders after 10 of 36: 1. Harvick-351, 2. Kyle Busch-342, 3. Edwards-337, 4. Johnson-329, 5. Logano-316, 6. Kurt Busch-312, 7. Keselowski-300, 8. Earnhardt-279, 9. Truex-274, 10. Austin Dillon-272.

SADLER GETS FIRST WIN IN TWO YEARS.

Elliott Sadler won Saturday's Talladega Xfinity Series race the hard way.

He fought for it. Sadler had run near the front of the pack for most of the race, but

only led a few feet near the end.

The race went into overtime after there was a caution for debris on lap 110 of the scheduled 113-lap race. Sadler was lined up in the third spot for the green-white-checked finish, behind Joey Logano, the leader. Logano was able to hold off the other chargers, but Sadler was right on his rear bumper as the cars came out of turn-4 and headed for the finish line.

Sadler faked a move to the high side, and Logano tried to block. Sadler came back down, and Logano tried to do the same. But he lost control and ran into Sadler, then bounced into the outside wall, while Sadler was able to continue.

Immediately after Logano hit the wall, NASCAR put out the caution flag, freezing the field.

For a few minutes it looked like Brennan Poole would be the winner, but when the video tapes were reviewed, it showed Sadler being in front at the moment the caution occurred.

"People don't know how hard it is to win one of these race," said a jubilant Sadler. "The team gave me a great car and I was determined not to let them down."

"I had a plan for the end of the race. Joey tried to block me, but I knew I had to keep digging."

Justin Allgaier was second, followed by Brennan Poole, Jeremy Clements, Brendan Gaughan, Austin Dillon, Daniel Suarez, Matt Tifft, Chase Elliott, and Aric Almirola.

Top-10 leaders after 9 of 33: 1. Sadler-314, 2. Suarez-314, 3. T. Dillon-281, 4. Allgaier-280, 5. Gaughan-279, 6. B. Jones-273, 7. E. Jones-263, 8. Poole-251, 9. Wallace Jr.-229, 10. Reed-221.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Chase Elliott won his second NASCAR Sprint Cup Pole this past Sunday at Talladega.

His father Bill, won the same pole 30 years ago.

While Chase hasn't yet ascended to the racing heights that his father has, he's well on the way to making a name for himself at the sport's highest level.

This is his rookie season in the Sprint Cup Series, and he already has two poles, two top-5 finishes, and is 12th in driver points.

"This is definitely a special place," said Chase Elliott of Talladega. "This has always been a special place to him and it's certainly

great to be here and have the opportunity."

Elliott also won the pole for the season-opening Daytona 500, but he crashed and finished 37th. He's back in the same car he drove at Daytona, and he credited his No. 24 team for giving him such a good car.

"Man, this is cool," he continued. "Those guys do such a good job. And as I said in Daytona, this had nothing to do with me. This is the car that we had. This is the same car we had in Daytona. They brought another fast one here."

"Obviously I have a lot to learn," he said. "The race last time at Daytona didn't go so good. Hopefully for me, I'll just try to take what I learned and try to cut down those dumb mistakes that I made in the Daytona 500 this year and just try to be smarter."

"The first thing is making it to the end and obviously I didn't do a very good job of that in February. Our first goal is to try to get to the end of the race; and if we can get there, just try to be smart."

Elliott took over driving duties of the No. 24 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet at the beginning of the 2016 season.

He won the 2014 Xfinity Series championship, becoming the first rookie to win a national series NASCAR title.

Last year, Elliott was named the NASCAR Xfinity Series Most Popular Driver for the second year in a row.

He was born November 28, 1995 in Dawsonville, Georgia.

Weekend Racing: The Sprint and truck teams travel to the 1.5-mile Kansas Speedway. The Xfinity Series teams have an off week.

Fri., May 6; Truck Series race 4 of 23; Starting time: 8:30 pm ET; TV: Foxsports1.

Sat., May 7; Sprint Cup race 11 of 36; Starting time: 7:30 pm ET; TV: Foxsports1.

Racing Trivia Question: Who owns the Kansas Speedway?

Last Week's Question: Talladega opened in 1969. Who won the first Cup race? **Answer:** Richard Brickhouse. That was the year of the driver boycott. Not all the regular Cup teams participated.

You may contact the Racing Reporter by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com. NT(MAY4,C)1c

Panthers Baseball... continued from 2C

the final inning.

Mancuso allowed two hits and fanned seven over 7 innings and 90 pitches. He also walked three and just one of his two runs were earned.

Union will now host Bleckley County on Wednesday as they host the second round for the first time during their recent four-year state playoff stint. They are also seeking their first Elite 8 appearance since the 1995 State Runner-Up team.

The Royals (18-9) will offer a much tougher challenge than what the Panthers saw from a 6-18 Manchester team.

Bleckley County is led by the pitching of sophomore ace Carter Raffield and senior Wesley Hobbs, who anchor a staff that allows around 4 runs-per-game.

Although, in region-play they gave up 3 runs-per-game.

Raffield allowed 7 hits and 2 earned runs in their 3-2 win over Early County in game one of last week's opening round series.

He struck out five and

walked one over seven innings.

Hobbs and senior Ty Edge combined for the 8-6 game two win with Hobbs going 5 innings and Edge two.

In their two games vs Region Champion Lamar County, Raffield got the start in both games allowing 2 earned and 3 earned, respectively.

Offensively, Edge, Raffield, junior Chance Pittman, junior Benji Knighton, and sophomore Chandler Abney highlight a lineup that averages 5.7 runs-per-game. That number stretches to almost 7 per-game in region-play.

Union County scored runs at a rate of 7.3 per-contest overall and almost 8 per-game in region-play. The Panthers allow just over 4 per-game overall and right at 3 a-game in region-play.

Games one and two of the second round series with Bleckley County are scheduled for Wednesday beginning at 3:30 p.m. with the third game taking place on Thursday at 3:30 p.m., if necessary.

Veterans Appreciation Fishing Rodeo

Veterans Appreciation Fishing Rodeo will be held on Friday, May 6, 2016, 9 a.m.-12 noon at the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery, located in Fannin County on Rock Creek Road off GA Hwy. 60.

This free event is open to all United States Military Veterans and Active Duty Service. Please bring your own fishing gear and bait. This is a

rain or shine event. All Georgia Sport Fishing Regulations will apply. Free lunch will be served.

Come on out and enjoy an action-packed morning of fishing for beautiful Rainbow and Brook Trout stocked at the hatchery in Rock Creek especially for this event!

Please call the hatchery at 706-838-4723 for more information. NT(MAY4,Z)3CA