

Sports

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Union County 12&U softball overpowers the field at District Lady Panthers outscore the competition 60-2 during during four game tourney

North Georgia News
Sports Special

Dawsonville - The Union County Lady Panthers 12&U softball team traveled to the District Tournament in Dawsonville on June 11th and - four games and 60 runs later - were crowned District Champions.

Union County set the tone in the opening game by blasting White County 15-0. Later that day, the Lady Panthers handed the host team, Dawson County a 17-1 beating.

Winning the first two games put the Lady Panthers into the District semi-finals against Barrow County, who offered little resistance to the Purple and Gold, who won handily, 12-1.

The District Championship was held the next day with Banks County getting the final crack at Union County, but once again, it was total dominance by the Lady Panthers who pounded the Lady Leopards to the tune of a 16-0 shutout.

This Friday, Union County will open State Tournament play at Bartow County. The State Tournament will run through the weekend with the championship game scheduled for Sunday.

Union County will be gunning for its second 12&U state softball title in four years.



During the tournament, Union County punished opposing pitching with a .691 batting average while playing error-free in the field for the entire weekend. Pictured above (Top Left to Bottom Right): Asst. Coach Tim Tracy, Rebekah Chambers, Anna Ruryk, Delana Stephens Head Coach George Burnette, Trinity Queen, Allie Brey, Asst. Coach Holly Chambers, Kaylee Helton, Tori Tracy, Caley Davis, Ansley Collins, Adaley Burnette, Jessica Lara.

Union County High School athletics 2015-16 year-in-review (part two)

By Todd Forrest
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(Continued from last week)
Union County athletics peaked in the spring time with the baseball and girls soccer teams capturing back-to-back Region titles before reaching the Elite 8. Emma Garrison would dominate the Region 8-AA Championships before finishing second at the State Championships in the 800 Meter event and fourth in the 1600M.

The Lady Panthers golf team would also turn in a commanding performance at the Region Tournament - taking first place by 40 strokes with an individual Region title performance from Maddie Horinek, who shot a 76 to lead the way.

At the State Tournament, Allie Horinek, who was second in 8-AA with an 80, turned in a 77 - good enough for fourth in the State - to lead the Lady Panthers to their second consecutive third place finish in Class AA.

The boys soccer team claimed runner up honors in 8-AA for the second straight year, and once again reached the Sweet 16 where they fell 3-1 at Putnam County - the only public school soccer team to reach the Final Four.

In the opening round, the Panthers scored three in the first half and three in the second during a 6-0 shutout of Temple.

The only Region loss came to Riverside by a score of 3-1. The Eagles would advance to the Elite 8 where they fell to GAC 1-0. However, Union County would provide plenty of excitement during the regular season with penalty kick victories over Fannin County, at Rabun County, and at Oglethorpe County, along with a come-from-behind, double-overtime win vs Social Circle that determined second and third place in 8-AA.

The Lady Panthers soccer team lost a total of three regular season games and went undefeated in 8-AA during their two-year stint atop the region.

After breezing through the regular season with a 10-2 mark, Union throttled Chattahoochee County 9-0 in round one during a contest that saw both the first and second half shortened to 20 minutes after Head Coach Tim Hunter's squad grabbed a 7-0 lead in the game's opening moments.

In Round Two, the Lady Panthers cruised to a 7-0 victory over Berrien following a 5-0 half-

time advantage.

However the Elite 8 was a different story as Pace Academy, a metro-Atlanta private school, rolled into Blairsville and dropped eight first half goals on the home team in a 10-0 Union loss.

Union County baseball took the eventual State Champion Lovett down-to-the-wire in game one, and if not for a pair of controversial calls, the Panthers season could have ended much differently.

While the basketball teams were replacing the majority of their starting lineups, Union baseball replaced seven starters and a head coach, only to claim its second consecutive Region title and reach the Sweet 16 for the third time in four years.

The Panthers Elite 8 trip was the program's first in 21 years.

With the majority of the baseball team being members of Union County basketball's Sweet 16 squad, and unable to pick up a bat and glove until March, the Panthers got off to a rocky 2-3 start on the diamond that included home losses to Towns County and Washington-Wilkes.

But new Head Coach Robby Roxbury and company quickly corrected course and went 10-2 over their next dozen games, putting Region 8-AA in a choke hold. But everything changed during the final week of the season.

A bizarre loss at Rabun County saw the Panthers' pitching staff suddenly unable to throw strikes, thus allowing 7 runs, despite tossing a combined two-hitter vs the Wildcats. Three days later, Union coughed up a late lead in game one of a doubleheader at Social Circle, and were suddenly out of first place for the first time since the opening week of the season.

In order to secure a share of the Region title, Union needed a win in game two at Social Circle. To secure the No. 1 seed, the Panthers would need to win by at least two runs.

Suddenly, as if the back-to-back losses never happened, Union took the Redskins to the woodshed in a 13-3 shellacking to claim its second straight region crown, while leaving little doubt as to who is the best team in 8-AA.

The continued improvement by the Union County athletic programs can be attributed to the hard work and dedication by the student athletes and the coaching staff. Sports is no longer a seasonal activity as you will find student athletes, sometimes with the help of coaches or parents, perfecting their craft year-round, and their success



on the field, course, track, and court is proof of their determination to be the best not only in the class room, but also in their sport-of-choice.

Union County continues to send its student-athletes to the next level and Emma Garrison's recent commitment to the University of Georgia proves that major conferences like the SEC are beginning to notice what is taking place up in Blairsville.

Garrison becomes the fifth Union County athlete to play at a Power 5 Conference school (ACC, SEC, Big 10, Big 12, Pac 12) over

the last 15 years, joining the likes of Robbie Brown (Georgia Tech - football), Andrew Williams (Georgia - football), Candace Williams (Georgia - basketball), and Blake Gowder (Vanderbilt - football).

As for 2016-17, the football and softball teams will hit the field in early-August, with the softball season approximately 6 weeks away.

Union County Football will scrimmage White County on Aug. 5th and Cross Country also begins practice in early-August.

MUSA registration underway

Fall soccer registration is open for age groups U6-U16

Registers online at www.mountainsooccer.org
Registration forms are also available to print from the website. Forms can be mailed to P. O. Box 1862, Blairsville, GA 30514.

Deadline to register is July 17, 2016.

For additional information please check out our website at

mountainsooccer.org or email us at musa.soccer@gmail.com.

10&U Softball advances to State

The Union County 10&U softball team will join the 12&U Lady Panthers at the Dizzy Dean State Tournament.

After a pair of wins to open the tournament, Union County battled its way out of the losers bracket to knock off Barrow County twice.

The Lady Panthers opened with a win over Dawson County on Friday, June 10th, then took care of business in round two by beating Fannin County, the following day.

Union ran into trouble on Sunday when Barrow County

dropped them into losers bracket.

On Monday, the Lady Panthers bounced back with a win over White County. Following the win, Union met Barrow County and came out on top in the rematch.

The final game would be delayed by weather until Thursday when Union prevailed and returned to Blairsville as District Champions.

More details regarding the 10&U softball team will be available in next week's edition of the *North Georgia News*.

Young Cane Lodge Double Elimination Cornhole Tournament

Blairsville Civic Center at 185 Wellborn Street

July 11, 2016

Sign Up 10 AM
Start 11 AM

\$10 Entry Fee

First Place Prize
Custom made
Cornhole Boards w/
Bags for each team
member

Concession stand will be open
Hot Dogs, Hamburgers and Drinks

For further Information contact:
David Abercrombie 706-897-1234
Evan Hughes 706-835-7836
Jason Seabolt 706-835-6978

Apply now for Run Above the Clouds Scholarship

To Woody Gap 2016 graduates and those who are currently in the ongoing scholarship process with The Run Above the Clouds: this is notification that applications are now being accepted for the 2016/2017 school year.

Applications are available at the Suches Community Center which is normally open on Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 10 AM till noon.

If you are unable to



pick up an application or have questions, please contact Ruth Ann Miner at (706)747-5434.

Please note that the deadline for providing completed applications is June 25, 2016. NJ0615.A1JSH

Football and cheerleading registration ends June 24

Sign-ups at the Union County Recreation Department are coming to an end on June 24th.

Football registration fee: \$100
Cheerleading registration fee: \$105

Please note that our website is currently down so come by our office to register! (310 Wellborn St.)

**For more information call the Recreation office at 706-439-6074