

Sports

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14&U Baseball dominates District 6 Tournament

Union's 10&U and 12&U All-Star teams still in the mix

By Todd Forrest
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Jefferson - The Union County Recreation Department had its first team punch a ticket to the State Tournament last week, when the 14&U baseball team went undefeated in the District 6 Tournament at Jefferson.

The Panthers toughest contest came in the opening round when they held on to beat Towns County 8-6 in the first game.

Union wouldn't see that close of a contest for the remainder of the tournament.

In Round Two, the Panthers knocked off Hall County 7-3, locking up no lower than a third place finish.

Union County would then take host team Jefferson to the woodshed in a 15-5 beating. The Dragons would eventually get by Towns County in the loser's bracket, earning them another shot at the Panthers.

Union would have to wait an extra day to celebrate as the final game was rained out, but once Union took the field, they defeated Jefferson for the second time, by a score of 9-5.

The 14&U Panthers will begin State Tournament action this Friday in Calhoun. The playoff brackets will be drawn on Tuesday, when Union will know its first round opponent and game time.

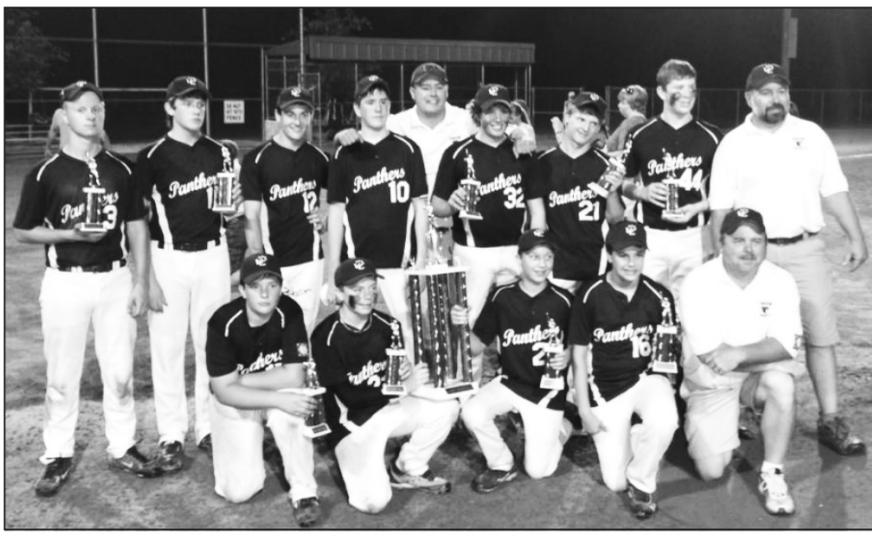
Elsewhere, Union County's 10&U and 12&U are still in the winners bracket, and as of this writing, are on the verge of advancing to the State playoffs.

The 12&U are in action just up the road in Fannin County.

The 12&U Panthers knocked off Jackson County on Friday night and Dawson County on Saturday. On Monday Union faced the winner of Barrow County and Jefferson with a berth in the Championship Game on the line.

If Union reaches the title game, it would be held at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, with the "if necessary" game taking place at 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Meanwhile the 10&U



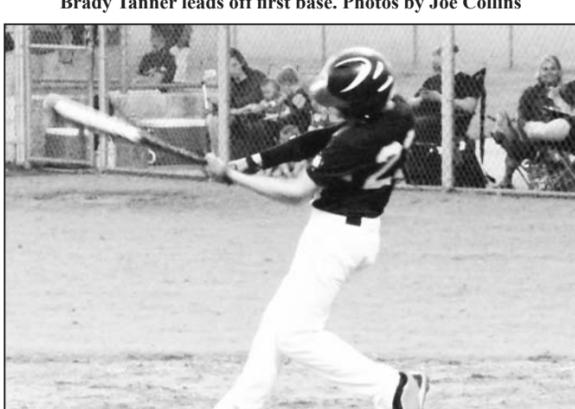
Union County's 14&U All-Star Team: Kyle Underwood, Cole Davis, Cole Jones, Zach Gilliam, Will King, Will Ball, Luke Collins, Luke Watson, Brady Tanner, Bryan English, and Devan Anderson. Coaches: Dustin Rogers, Charlie Davis, and Don Anderson. Photo courtesy of UCRD



Brady Tanner leads off first base. Photos by Joe Collins



Devan Anderson



Cole Davis takes his hacks against Jefferson.



Bryan English

Panthers are in Winder, also looking for a spot in State Tournament.

Union opened the tournament with a win over Jackson County on Friday before knocking off the host team, Barrow

County on Saturday morning. The Panthers then took care of business against Jefferson.

On Sunday, Union traveled back to Winder where they picked up another victory over North Hall.

Union County's 10&U will now play for the District 6 Championship on Monday, where it would take two Panther losses to prevent them from reaching the Dizzy Dean State Tournament.

Joe Collins

Tips from the Range

There is a split second of action that determines how your shot will turn out and that action is at the very top of the swing when the arms start their initial move down. This is the primary area that will allow the club to start on the proper path back to the ball, and if it isn't smooth and solid, the club head will be wrong at impact. It is vital that you allow the club to "fall" out of the top. Don't influence the initial drop with the hands in any way or you will create a bad path for the arms to follow. This is the most consistent flaw I see in amateurs and many don't even realize they are doing it. The top has to be correct to produce good shots consistently.

When we talk about the action we have out of the top of our swing, the one word that should come to mind is smooth. If you look at the great Tom Watson's swing you will notice that he starts his downswing before the arms finish their arc to the top. In other words, his weight transfer is headed toward his left side before the completion of the backswing. This movement makes his downswing very smooth because it allows his lower body to start the move to impact. Remember, this move to the front foot leads the weight transfer on the downswing and that is the key to swinging smoothly.

There are two major reasons why the "move from the top" can get fouled up and the first is BALANCE! How many times have we talked about balance as a key to the proper swing? If the core of the swing tilts, then the club will follow a very negative path and you will not like the outcome. Typically it will be a pull. You need to feel as though you are leaning away and behind the ball at impact and that will guarantee your arms extend. This will also allow your lower body to begin the downswing.

You must not do anything with your hands as the club starts its path to impact. If you are out of balance at the top, then you will need to cast your hands first to help reestablish your center of gravity on the downswing. This early release of the hands will also make you open your shoulders to soon, so make sure you are in a good balanced position throughout the whole of your stance and swing.

There is an interesting point that I would like to emphasize

while talking about balance and the start of your downswing. Your arms weigh approximately ten pounds each. When you start your backswing, you will be swinging twenty pounds of active weight in motion to the top and then returning it to impact. That alone will pull you to your toes during the swing, and once you are on your toes, you will have to re-adjust your balance and WHAM, that rocking of the weight has made you swing bad out of the top and your shot is over, start cussing cause most likely, "it ain't gonna be pretty." You must stay in balance throughout the whole of the swing and not just at address. Most often times when you see a tour pro hit a shot offline, it was because his/her balance was bad. It is one of the biggest things they work on when looking at fundamental issues.

The second most popular error that affects the start of the downswing is the need to "hit" the ball instead of trusting the swing to do the work for us. This overwhelming desire to hit it hard is a good attribute but it has its place and time during the swing. It is natural for us to try and manipulate the speed of the club with our smaller muscles like those found in the hands and wrist because it feels better. But, it is the larger muscle group that we must engage to achieve the best results and greatest distance. I have always said that with proper accuracy will come proper distance. The two go hand in hand when swinging correctly. This is why the pros can hit those long drives into really narrow fairways.

To avoid this error, you must simply be in balance and let the body swing the club. Keep your grip pressure firm but don't squeeze the grip and allow the big muscles to control the action. Your hands and arms are along for the ride until just before impact when the lower hand can pour on the power. This will happen naturally if the weight transfer is correct and your head is behind impact. The great Ben Hogan said, "I hit the ball as hard as I can with my right hand but this action must wait until the club has left the top."

Focus on how the club leaves the top of the swing and you will begin to see that the club will work for you and not against you. Clubs are designed to swing hard, but do it in the correct sequence: Upper body first on the backswing and lower body first on the downswing. Let the hands play catch-up on the downswing and watch your shots improve.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

Despite injury scare, Panther camp a success

By Todd Forrest
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The Union County Lady Panthers hosted their team camp last Monday through Wednesday, while the Panthers team camp was Thursday through Saturday.

The Lady Panthers received quite a scare on Wednesday when 8-AA Player of the Year and rising senior Lauren Zollinger went down with what appeared to be a severe knee injury.

As of press time the results of the M.R.I. were not available, but according to Lady Panther Coach David Tucker, the injury isn't as extreme as originally feared and the starting point guard should be at full strength when practice opens in October.

As for the rest of the team, and the turnout during the summer camps, Coach Tucker didn't have any complaints.

"The main people have been here," Tucker said. "You don't ever have any trouble here. The main ones have been here and it's been all good so far. The freshman have looked good and we've got some people coming on. We're starting to put things together."

The Panthers are getting adjusted to a new head coach in Casey Jones, while replacing four starters at the same time. Right now Jones' priorities are executing the fast break and finding an identity defensively.

"Camp was really well thus far," Jones said. We have seen vast improvements in each individual and as a team. We are starting to see things defensively and rotate accordingly. We want to be a good man-to-man defensive team and we are headed in that direction. We have played strictly man all summer. We will mix it up during the season, but right now our focus is playing man.

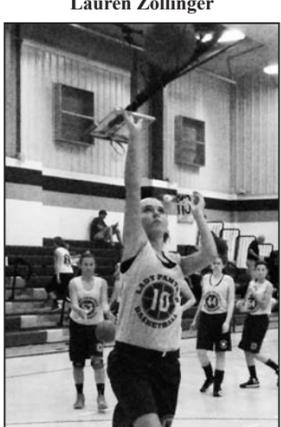
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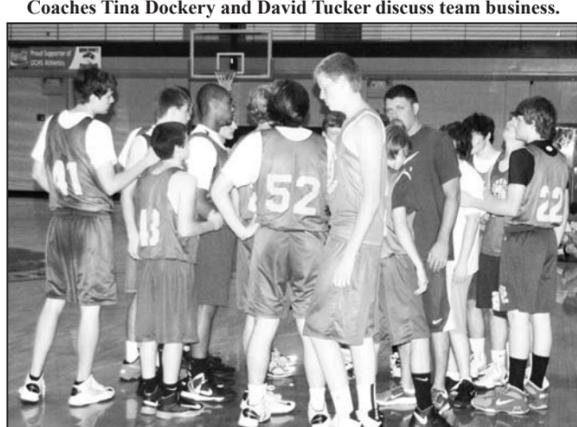
Lauren Zollinger



Coaches Tina Dockery and David Tucker discuss team business.



Lady Panthers warming up



Panthers huddle before a game on Thursday afternoon.

lieve in the fast break. This belief has come from seeing the productivity of the break during the games. Our big men are running the floor and the guards are getting them the ball. We still force too many passes which results in turnovers, but we're running and that's the main thing I want to see. As time goes on we want to eliminate turnovers and be able to play fast, but not hurry. We have had great attendance all summer.

"These guys have really worked hard and it is evident. We plan to work right on through to October when the season starts. Our goal is to be playing our best in February."



(L-R) Kyle Hamby fires a trey and Eliyah Ryals with a jumper. Photos/Todd Forrest



Jordan camp and book signing this week



Brian Jordan and Will Nelson visit Meeks Park as the former Brave and Falcon will host a baseball/softball camp at the park. Photo/Todd Forrest

Two-Sport Athlete Brian Jordan has announced a series of baseball/softball camps aimed at scouting talent and inspiring children.

When former MLB star, Brian Jordan played for the Atlanta Braves, he made his childhood dreams come true. Since 1998 and more so since his retirement from baseball in 2006, Jordan has worked tirelessly within his children's foundation to give less fortunate kids opportunities through health, fitness, literacy and scholarships. That mission is at the forefront of the baseball and softball camps on his calendar this summer. Jordan will be in Blairsville beginning Thursday with a book signing before the camp begins though Saturday.

"GameFace Sports Camps are really multi-purpose. I've always said 'In Every Child There is the Potential for Excellence,' so, we are out there right in the thick of it trying to prove that theory! We teach all five tools that kids need for baseball and the tools needed for softball too. My friends and I are able to teach, mentor and be a real and tangible example of success and that can matter so much to a child's hope for his future. We are able, with the help of my foundation and the community to provide scholarships for students that couldn't otherwise afford the camp and finally we are looking for All-Stars! We'll take the MVPs from each age group in each city and

put them on an All-Star team that will travel to Orlando the week after Christmas and they'll participate in the Game Face Stars and Stripes Winter World Series at Universal Studios," Jordan explained.

Only 25 students in each age group will be accepted into the camps. Along with Jordan and other instructors on his list of probable Pro's are former Braves catcher Javy Lopez, renowned Braves pitching coach Leo Mazzone, Golden Glove recipient Marquis Grissom among other MLB alumni.

"We are so excited to travel to these communities to meet and teach the kids and to build our world series teams!" said Jordan. Baseball instruction is for ages 9-18 and softball instruction is for ages 11-18. The camp is open to the community, citizens are encouraged to come out and watch. For their participation, kids will receive two days of top caliber instruction, Game Face Sports Glasses, hat and jersey along with lunch both days.

Jordan will be holding a book signing on Thursday from 3-5 p.m. at the Union County Community Center.

A few partnership opportunities exist for area businesses that would like to be involved. To register visit www.gameface-sportscamps.com. For questions or to get involved call 404-581-9200 or email tess@kasemanagement.com or traciep@kasemanagement.com