

Hughes, Odom taking their talents to next level

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Two more Union County student athletes have put pen to paper and will be off to compete at the collegiate level.

Lady Panther softball star Hannah Hughes will be attending North Georgia College and State University in Dahlonega.

Zach Odom, another star of the diamond, will be playing baseball just up the road as a Young Harris College Mountain Lion.

Odom, a two-time Region 8-AA First Team selection, has started each year at UCHS. In his freshman season, Odom and the Panthers reached the State Tournament for the first time in 15 years. During that 2010 campaign, Odom hit .358 with 4 homers, 20 RBIs, and 8 stolen bases.

"He is a 5-tool player," Union Head Baseball Coach Brandon Bradburn said. "He can hit for power and average, has a great arm and glove, and is a great base runner with speed, but his determination and work ethic is what sets him apart from most other high school players."

Over the past two seasons, the shortstop has hit .354 with 21 steals, 6 homers, and scored 52 runs.

"I chose Young Harris



Hannah Hughes (top) with family and coaches. Zach Odom (bottom) with coaches. Photos by Todd Forrest.

because I have friends there and it's close to home," Odom said. "I didn't know how I would handle being far away. Then when I finally visited, I fell in love with the campus. All the coaches and everyone were really good to me."

Odom spoke with other

schools but says that Young Harris was always the front runner. "The other schools didn't interest me as much as Young Harris."

With the baseball season just months away, Odom is ready to add a State Championship to his impressive resume.

"I want to win state,"

he said. "That's our goal every year."

Hannah Hughes is familiar with the State Tournament. The North Georgia signee has played in four GHSA State Tournaments and leaves Union County with the school record for home runs, walks, and RBIs.

Hughes has been named First Team All-Region, Region Player of the Year and First Team All-State.

The Lady Panther first baseman joins former Lady Panther teammate Kaitlyn Seabolt as a Lady Saint, where they will be gunning for a College World Series appearance.

"I've always wanted to go to North Georgia," Hughes said. "I was really excited when they offered a scholarship."

Hughes has visited North Georgia twice with her classmates and it wasn't just the softball program that caught her attention.

"I really liked the campus and the nursing program that they have," she said.

Hughes is hoping to make an impact as soon as she steps on the diamond.

"I want to start my first year but if I don't, I'll just have to work harder, she said."

Being reunited with Seabolt won't hurt either.

"I can't wait to play with her again," Hughes said.

Another Panther football season in the books

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Union County Panthers' football has completed the 2012 season with a 6-4 record.

Six wins is a remarkable feat considering the Panthers had only won seven games during the previous two seasons.

This Panther squad was led by 13 seniors.

The North Georgia News would like to extend a congratulations to the Class of 2013 and wish them nothing but success in the future.

Next week the North Georgia News will honor the senior cheerleaders and band members. The Union County senior football players are as follows.

T Bentley is the son of Tsali and Jacquie Bentley. He has played football for four years and has been named Offensive Player of the Week, Special Teams Player of the Week, Game Captain, and listed in the *Gainesville Times* Honor Roll. He earned the Football Academic Award for the team's highest GPA the past two years. T has played baseball for four years.

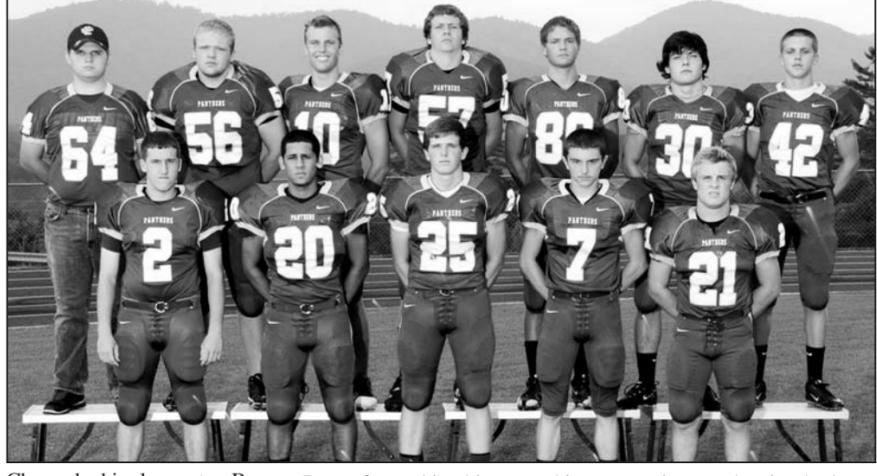
Bentley is ranked No. 1 in his class academically, currently serves as the President of the Beta Club, Vice Chairman of the United Community Bank Junior Board, an FCA Student Leader, and was awarded the Georgia Certificate of Merit. He has been a Student Government Class Representative for the past three years and was voted the senior superlative of "Most Likely to Succeed" by his classmates. He earned the highest rank of Eagle Scout from the Boy Scouts of America and is heavily involved with the First Baptist Church Student Choir where he participates in yearly mission trips.

Bentley is in the process of earning his private pilot's license and plans to attend the United States Air Force Academy or Georgia Tech. He wants to study Aerospace Engineering and pursue a career flying jets. His favorite football memory is the Senior Rafting Trip down the Nantahala River. He would like to thank his parents for providing him with the best opportunities possible and always being there for him, his sister Morgan who is his biggest fan, and most of all, his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the gift of salvation and many blessings.

Clay Burnette was elected by his teammates as the Captain of the football team this year. He is the son of Billy and Robin Burnette. He has played football for four years and has earned Player of the Week awards. Burnette is also the catcher for the Union County High School baseball team and has played baseball for four years. His favorite football memory has been beating Fannin County three times while he has been on the team.

Clay's future plans include attending college, majoring in Business, and living life to the fullest. He would like to thank God, his parents, family, all of his coaches, Dr. Allan Lee, Paul McBride, the Quarterback Club, his teammates and the panther fans.

CJ Byers is the son of Charlie and Cindy Byers. Having played football for four years, Byers has been awarded Player of the Week and was named Game Captain for the Rabun County game. Additionally, he plays basketball where he earned the Defensive Player of the Year award.



Chosen by his classmates, Byers was awarded the senior superlative of "Class Favorite" and is an active member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He will always remember being with his Defensive Line brothers - Craig and Luther Jones - and the many Waffle House trips with Jacob Rogers.

Future plans might take him to Japan to become a ninja and fight off the evil Samurai in true Will Ferrell fashion. But more than likely, he will attend college and become a physical therapist or teacher.

He would like to thank God, his mom, dad, and sister. He especially wants to thank his brother Sean for being the greatest inspiration to him, and thank his church family for all they do.

Jared Croskey is the son of Nancy Croskey. This is Jared's first year playing football which has earned him a 'pat on the back' from Coach Allison. His favorite memory from this year was playing cards and having fun in the camper with Austin, Dylan, Coleman, Reid, Jair, and Cooper. Croskey has played baseball for four years in high school and was awarded the Defensive Player of the Year award (also known as Mr. Defense). He is an active member of the Beta Club and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Always sporting a mischievous grin, Jared was voted "Best Smile" by his classmates.

Croskey plans to attend Kennesaw State University to pursue a personal fitness degree. He would then like to help Coach Byers with the weight training class. He would like to thank his mom, stepfather Robert, and two brothers Kevin & Todd. They have all been there for him when he needed them the most.

Cody Davenport is the son of Deana Thomas and Brian Davenport. He has played football for four years. He was named a game captain and is known for his brightly colored socks and Under Armour. Davenport also plays baseball and has been on the baseball team for four years. Voted by his classmates for the senior superlative of "Most Spirited - Class of 2013," he is also an active member of Beta Club and Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

He plans to attend Kennesaw State University to study Sports Medicine and Physical Therapy. He would also like to pursue a career in modeling for Ralph Lauren as a backup plan. Davenport will always remember creating the bonds with his teammates and getting the opportunity to practice.

He would like to thank God for blessing him with the ability to play football. He would like to thank his friends and family for their support and Callison

Payne for pushing him to try his best no matter what. Most of all, he would like to thank his mom and dad for being there for him no matter how hard things got. They stood by him through thick and thin and he is so grateful to have them in his life.

Eric Alan Hougrand is the son of Richard Hougrand and Lisa Hougrand. He has kicked for the Panthers for four years and was named First Team All Area in 2012. Currently, he leads our area in the number of punts within the 20-yard line. His favorite moment was kicking a 44-yard field goal at Towns County. Eric has also played soccer for four years and is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Hougrand plans to kick for a college football team and leave his mark there as well. He would also like to make a lot of money in the future. He enjoyed going on the many trips to Zaxby's with Jacob Rogers this year. He would like to thank God, all of the coaches, his mom, dad, and sister, the team chaplain Richard Rivera and all the Panther Fans for their support.

Johnathan Hughes is the son of Tim Hughes and Kim Hughes. He has played football all four years in high school and has been named Player of the Week, Game Captain, and listed on the *Gainesville Times* Honor Roll. Hughes' most memorable football moment was winning the Homecoming game this year. After graduation, he would like to attend college.

Hughes would like to thank God for blessing him with the ability to play football, his family and coaches for always being there for him, and his teammates for turning around his senior year.

Craig Jones is the son of Travis and Melissa Jones. He was awarded Game Captain for the Andrews game and named Defensive Player of the Week. His favorite football memory will be breaking the tie with Fannin County for the most wins between the two schools. His classmates voted him "Most Adventurous" for his senior superlative. Jones plans to attend Kennesaw State University and get a business degree. He would like to start his own successful business.

Jones would like to thank his girlfriend Emily and his friends for supporting him, CJ Byers and Luther Jones - the best 2 defensive line buddies he could ask for, and above all his parents who have done more for him than he could ever repay or thank them for.

Josh Kim is the son of Tonya Belor. This is his second year to play for Union County. He has been named Defensive Player of the Week, Special Teams Player of the Week, and Game Captain. His favorite

memories were beating Andrews and winning the Senior Pumpkin Carving Contest with Johnathan and Clay. Kim also has played soccer and basketball.

After graduation, Kim plans to move to Florida, attend college to become a physical therapist, and start a family. He would like to thank his mother, God, and teammates Cody, Luther, Clay, Lalo, and Johnathan.

Lalo Rivera is the son of Josie Cardoza and Edward Rivera. Rivera has played football for two years in high school and soccer for one year. He has been named Player of the Week, Game Captain, and listed in the *Gainesville Times* Honor Roll. And he enjoyed beating Andrews this year.

Rivera wants to attend college after high school. He would like to thank God for giving him the ability to play football. He also wants to thank his sisters for being there for him when he needed them. And lastly, he must thank all his 'bros' - Clay, Johnathan, and Josh.

Jacob Vick is the son of Tracie and Jeff Shields. This is Vick's first year to play football for UCHS. He also played basketball and is an active member of Skills USA and Future Farmers of America. Vick enjoyed building friendships with his teammates especially on the Senior Rafting Trip down the Nantahala River.

After high school, he would like to attend Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College to study forestry and participate on the rodeo team as a bull rider. One day, he would like to be a game warden.

Vick would like to thank God, the Lunsford family and the Shields family for helping him get so far; the Stevens family for being there for him. He loves every one of you. Also, love to his Uncle Bo-Bo, Nanny Susie and Grandpa Jerry.

Jonah Whitmer is the son of Kevin and Georgia Whitmer. He has played football for four years and been awarded Player of the Week and Game Captain. His favorite football memory was getting an interception and being awarded Player of the Week in his first varsity start. He is also an active member of Skills USA.

Upon graduation, Jonah would like to attend North Georgia College and State University to become a physical therapist. He would like to get married, start a family, and live a fun and successful life. Whitmer would like to thank his mother and father for giving him such a wonderful childhood and always being there for him.

Keith Brewer, the son of Ronnie and Donna Brewer, has been the football manager for three years. Brewer has been awarded the Manager of the Year for three years in high school and

Joe Collins

Tips from the Range

I could literally talk about the mental aspect of the game for hours on end, and have actually done just that on cold winter days when the single malt was flowing and the course was closed. If you were to pick one topic that we would talk about that affects your score the most, in respect to the mental side of the game, it would be "Game Management". In layman's terms: You got to have a plan. No pro will attack any round without at least a simple strategy.

Look at it this way. Every pro on the P.G.A. tour can hit the ball, some better than others. Why is it then, that you only have one winner and the rest of the field is spread out over 30 to 40 shots? Why doesn't the best ball striker win the tournaments every time he/she plays? What made Tiger Woods so dominant in the late nineties and early two thousands and still makes him a great player today? Why is it that you hit the ball better than a lot of people you play against but just don't score as well? The answer to all of these questions is in how you prepare yourself for the round and in how well you know your own limitations. The better you play, the more enjoyment you will receive from your efforts, so you have to play your own game.

Golf swings and golf games are as different from golfer to golfer as night and day. You will never see identical golf swings, ever. You may find some that are similar but never the same. Just like our physiques are different, our swings have to be different. Therefore, everyone plays a different game with the same motives in mind. Many people play for sport or exercise but most play because it is a competitive sport. Not between you and your playing partner but between you and the golf course. Your goal is to beat the course not your playing partner or yourself; so first and foremost, you have to play your own game. Don't get caught up in trying to hit shots that are not in within your ability.

When designing a game plan for a particular course, pay attention to the limitations of your golf game. Don't try and hit it to places on the course that are risky. Play to the "fats" or to the widest landing areas. These areas are not always the closest to the green but are found on every hole to offer the golfer a good sporting chance of making par. Play away from trouble and stir clear of the dreaded two-stroke penalties like Out of Bounds.

If you are hitting your driver poorly on a given day and you step up to a long hole that requires a good accurate and long drive, put the 3-wood in your hands and

two years in middle school. He has also managed the basketball teams, baseball teams, and soccer teams for multiple years. He is currently a member of the wrestling team.

Brewer would like to continue in management or assistant coaching with the Union County Panthers and to work with and train young athletes.

He would like to thank God and his parents for their

support.

He wants to thank his teammates for allowing him to watch their backs and for them watching his in return. He thanks all the coaches for allowing him to participate with the teams and especially Coach Casey Jones for giving him his first management position.

Brewer sends his thanks to his teachers, the Panther Fans, and to all of his family.

focus on accuracy. Your back is already against the wall because you are not hitting the long club well, so give up twenty yards and put the ball in the fairway. Now you are hitting a longer shot into the green but it is your second shot not you're third or fourth. The driver would have been in the woods anyway because of the negative attitude about you're tee-shots.

Another interesting thing that will help you score well in relation to the mental game is the aspect of playing to your strengths. If you are an accurate player use your accuracy to attack the course and wait on the easier holes to try and make low scores. Be patient on the long holes and try not to make any score higher than a bogie.

If distance is your strong suit, then aim to places where you have comfortable shots into the greens. Many pros would prefer to hit a full shot into a green instead of the dreaded half-shot so you might need to focus a little more from the green back to the tee when planning your game.

"I used to walk the course from the green to the tee to get Watson's approach shots calculated perfectly," said Tom Watson's longtime caddie the late Bruce Edwards.

Many caddies learned that from Ben Hogan who was the ultimate example in how to prepare for a tournament.

We will look more in depth next week in how to prepare for a round of golf. It is the enjoyment of your time on the course that is our ultimate goal and if your mind is not focused on the game at hand then you will waste shots and not enjoy your day on the course. Try and prepare for your next round of golf with an emphasis on the strong points of your game. Learn to judge how you play certain clubs in your bag and try and develop an arsenal of shots to choose from. Play away from your weaknesses and always focus on your own game and the way you feel it should be played. Nobody knows your ability the way you do so trust your own judgment and concentrate on how it feels to swing the club in relation to your position on the course. If you get in trouble, recover as quickly as possible by getting the ball back on the short grass and then go back to your overall game plan for the day. This will give you vision and will allow you to forget about the negative thoughts of a bad shot.

I hope that it is becoming more obvious about how important the mental game is. Hogan used to say, "If I can't see it, then I can't hit it." He never used a yardage book or distance markers, which is a testament to how your mind can control the outcome of your round. Work on your mental game as well as your swing to lower your score.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

UCHS Swim season opens



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a personal best. Anna Knight was first at 27.27 and Amy Brumley in sixth at 37.92, a personal best.

During the 100 Free, Brennen Wilkes brought home fifth at 1:01.83, a personal best time. Nicole Gautieri again placed first at 1:01.72 another personal best time. Lindsey McCann came in second at 1:09.47, also a personal best.

In the 200 Free Relay, Union's men finished fourth with a team best time of 1:48.23. The women came in third at 2:03.04.

The 100 Back was led by Anna Knight, who came in second at 1:11.38, a personal best time.

Finally in the 100 Breast, Tanner Gay was second in a State Qualifying time of 1:06.57. This is Gay's third year to qualify in this event.

Austin Norton was fifth at 1:22.32, Lindsey McCann fourth with a personal best time of 1:32.40 and Lacey Hedger sixth at 1:54.82.

In the 50 Free: Austin Norton posted a 26.16 - a personal best. Brennen Wilkes came in sixth at 26.20, also