

Nix and Chambers headline Union softball's list of accolades

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
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Now that the 2015 softball season is in the books, several Union County Lady Panther players continue to receive high marks for their performance.

Six Union County players were named to the 8-AA All Region Team with Laken Chambers being selected twice.

The junior was named the 8-AA Pitcher of the Year and also picked up First Team honors for her offense.

Senior infielder Karley Nix was named First Team All Region after being chosen to play in the Senior Georgia Dugout Clinic All Star game at LaGrange College on Nov. 14th and 15th.

The top 80 seniors from all classifications in the state were allowed to participate.

The 80 players were divided up into four teams and Nix's team (players from Regions 7 and 8) finished the round-robin tournament with a 3-0 record.

Nix joined Social Circle's Haley Barnes, who was named the 8-AA Player of the Year, as the only two players from Region 8-AA.

This fall, Nix was second on the team with a .431 batting average and a .458 on base percentage. She was tied for first place with 44 hits and her 31 runs scored were good enough for second. She was fourth on the team with 19 RBIs - pretty impressive for someone that batted second in the lineup. She was also tied for second with 2 triples and tied for third with 9 stolen bases.

Ahead of Nix in batting average was Chambers, who hit .444 with a team best .500 on base percentage, a .707 slugging percentage, and a 1.207 OPS (on base percentage + slugging percentage).

She was first in homers with five, RBIs with 38, doubles with nine, and tied for first in hits with 44.

From the circle she won 18 games with a microscopic 1.33 ERA, while striking out 145 in 158 innings.

Union's other First Team selection was senior catcher Maddie Garrett, who spent her first year behind the plate in 2015 after three years in the outfield.

Garrett hit .330 on the year and was third on the team with a .445 on base percentage and fourth on the team with a .473 slugging percentage.

Her impressive on base percentage was due to her team-high 16 walks. Her 23 RBIs were good enough for third. She was tied for second with 2 homers and had second place all to herself in the doubles category with seven.

More importantly, her success behind the plate replacing a 4-year starter can't be overstated. And when you're the catcher of the Region Pitcher of the Year, that speaks volumes about the bond she formed with not only Chambers, but the entire pitching staff.

Kendra Tanner was one of three Lady Panthers named Second Team All-Region.



Karley Nix



Laken Chambers



Maddie Garrett



Lydia Arrowood



Kendra Tanner



Jillian Lawn

The junior shortstop was one of the most feared leadoff hitters in the Region, and the 1-2 punch she formed with Nix at the top of the order, proved deadly to the opposition.

Tanner was fourth on the team with a .340 batting average and a .426 on base percentage. She was second with a .538 slugging percentage and a .964 OPS.

Her 15 walks were second behind Garrett while her 8 triples and 33 runs scored were tops on the team. She also stole nine bases, good enough for a third place tie.

Third on the team in batting average at .356 was another second team selection; junior third baseman Lydia Arrowood.

She was fifth on the team with 21 runs scored and

was tied with Chambers for the fewest strikeouts among players with 100-plus plate appearances.

Rounding out the All Region picks is sophomore first baseman Jillian Lawn, who was tied for second with 2 homers and has second to herself with 31 RBIs.

She was tied with Garrett for fifth on the team with a .330 batting average. She was fifth in slugging at .457 and OPS at .826.

Finally, her 6 doubles were third most on the team.

Union six selections were second to Social Circle's seven and tied with Rabun County's six.

Washington Wilkes had four girls named All-Region while Greene and Oglethorpe had two each.

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ready to go.

"Bailey Daniel will be playing point guard and she's just a sophomore and that's a pretty big load but she's a pretty good player too."

Coach Tucker will enter his fifth year at the helm and by now his players have plenty of experience running his system that they've all bought into.

"We're going to keep doing what we've been doing," Coach Tucker said. "We're going to use the 1-1-3 full court (defense) and we're going to shoot the ball on offense."

Last year the Lady Panthers were 19-7 and 10-1 in Region 8-AA but fell in the Region Championship on a half-court buzzer-beater by Rabun County.

In the first round of State, Union dropped a hard fought 68-64 battle to Darlington.

"This is a great group of kids, the parents are great and I believe we'll be right there (in the mix for a Region 8-AA title) at the end," Coach Tucker said. "We're going to be okay. I think we're going to surprise some people."

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can give us some minutes on varsity."

The Panthers will feature five seniors and four juniors, but that doesn't equal experience, according to Coach Jones.

"We're not young age-wise, but we're young in experience," he said. "We have Chase (Shook) who started on varsity and Lawson (Baeninger) who played on varsity but that's it."

This season the Panthers must replace six seniors that included four starters that accounted for nearly all of Union's offensive production. In Coach Jones' first two seasons, he had practically the same starting lineup both years, but now, in year three, Jones goes from a guard-heavy team to one that relies on post play. Defensively we made

some minor changes but offensively, we've gone to a completely different offense," Coach Jones said. "We've had some really good guards over the last few years and those are going to be some big shoes to fill."

Luckily, Jones has Shook, a 6-foot, 8-inch senior that could not only become the best big man in 8-AA, but garner some Statewide attention, as well.

"When you have a 6-8 kid on the block, you want to get him the ball," Coach Jones said. "In the offense we run, he'll find himself 15-feet from the basket but he can hit that jumper and people don't respect (his jump shot)."

"But we're still going to try and get Chase the ball as much as we can on the block. If we can do that, it will be very

effective."

Coach Jones pointed out that there has been a rule change regarding rebounding and battling for position under the basket for the 2015-16 season.

According to Jones, following a shot attempt, once a potential rebounder has established position, you can't displace him from that position or it's a foul. The new rule will decrease the physical play and gives the smaller guys an advantage when larger players try to box them out.

"It's going to be tricky during the first few games to see how they call that," Coach Jones said.

Last year, the Panthers were 17-12 and placed third in Region 8-AA. They lost at Coosa, 68-62 in first round of State.

NASCAR 2015

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

"Rowdy" Kyle Busch Wins It All

HOMESTEAD, Fla. — Not only did Kyle Busch win the 2015 NASCAR Sprint Cup Championship, but he also won the last race of the season.

Busch's season ended much better than it started. He broke his right leg and left foot in an Xfinity Series race prior to the Daytona 500 and missed 11 races. To make the Chase, NASCAR rules required that he finish 30th or better during the regular 26-race season.

He finished 28th and had one victory, which made him Chase eligible.

Busch's hard work showed during Sunday's race. He had led 41 laps, but was running third behind Brad Keselowski and Kyle Larson on lap 253 of the 267-lap race, when a caution for debris came out.

He and the other leaders pitted for four fresh tires. On the restart, Busch quickly took over the lead from Keselowski. Kevin Harvick attempted to close on Busch, but with only eight laps remaining in the race, all Harvick could do was watch as Busch's No. 18 Toyota pulled away from him.

"What a great day," said Busch. "This is the dream of a lifetime. With all the things we went through being here is unbelievable. I've got to thank my wife and team for all the help and not allowing me to give up."

The championship was his first Sprint Cup title and the fourth for car owner Joe Gibbs. On Friday night, Busch's truck team driven by Erik Jones claimed the series championship, giving Busch an owner's title.

Kevin Harvick would have won his second Sprint Cup championship if he could have passed Busch, but he finished second, 1.86-seconds back.

"We had a lot of trouble getting off the corners," said Harvick. "The longer the runs, the more problems we had. Today, it didn't go our way."

Brad Keselowski finished third, while Joey Logano and Kyle Larson rounded out the top-five.

"Oh man, what a day," said Chase contender, Jeff Gordon, who finished sixth. "We had a decent car, but the handling wasn't what we had hoped for. I was loose for most of the race."

"But it's still a great day. I've had a great career, and while this wasn't my best race, it's been a wonderful experience, and I thank all my fans." Matt Kenseth, Kurt Busch, Jimmie Johnson, and Denny Hamlin were the remaining top-10 finishers.

The fourth Chase contender, Martin Truex Jr. finished 11th.

"We did our best, but obviously we are disappointed," said Truex. "The car just didn't handle the way we needed it to. Making the Chase was a great experience and we'll build on it."

Top-20 final points leaders: 1. Kyle Busch, 2. Harvick, 3. Gordon, 4. Truex, 5. Edwards, 6. Logano, 7. Keselowski, 8. Kurt Busch, 9. Hamlin, 10. Johnson, 11. Newman, 12. Earnhardt, 13. McMurray, 14. Menard, 15. Kenseth, 16. Bowyer, 17. Almirola, 18. Kahne, 19. Larson, 20. Biffle.

Buescher And Roush Win Xfinity Title

Chris Buescher's 11th-place finish in the season-ending Xfinity race was good enough to earn him his first series title.

Kyle Larson, who led 160 laps, was the race winner, followed by Austin Dillon, Erik Jones, Brian Scott, Ryan Blaney, Daniel Suarez, Ty Dillon, Chase Elliott, Regan Smith, and Darrell Wallace Jr.

Buescher's title run came in only his second season in the Xfinity Series. The championship marked the fifth time a Roush Fenway Racing driver has won an Xfinity Series championship and the third time in the past five seasons.

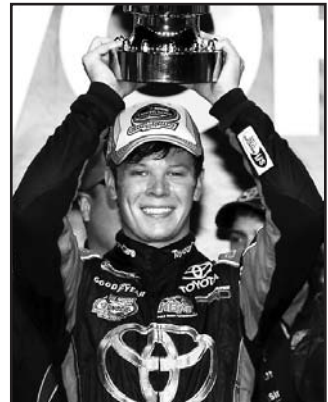
"This is the biggest moment in my career," said Bue-



Kyle Busch



Chris Buescher



Erik Jones

scher. "It's just an awesome year for our organization, for our team. The guys did a tremendous job - no DNFs all year, no mechanical failures, nothing that we beat ourselves on. We were flawless in that regard and it put us in the position to go out and win this thing like we did today. We didn't have to go out and win the race in order to bring the championship home. We had to make sure we finished and did just that. I'm so happy we were able to pull it off and, again, so proud of my team. They really stepped up to the occasion and made sure this happened."

The No. 22 car, owned by Penske Racing won the Owners Championship.

Daniel Suarez was the Xfinity Series Rookie of the Year.

Final top-10 points leaders: 1. C. Buescher-1190, 2. Elliott-1175, 3. T. Dillon-1172, 4. Smith-1168, 5. Suarez-1078, 6. Sadler-1075, 7. Wallace Jr.-1071, 8. Scott-1032, 9. Gaughan-902, 10. Reed-902.

Erik Jones Captures Truck Crown

Matt Crafton won the last Truck Series race of the season, but it was young Erik Jones who claimed the championship.

John Nemechek finished second in the race, followed by Tyler Reddick, Ben Kennedy, Timothy Peters, Erik Jones, Johnny Sauter, Daniel Hemric, Cameron Hayley, and John Wes Townley.

"Well, after Gateway back here in the summer months, we finished 23rd, and I think we were down 20-something points to Crafton, third in points, and at that point I don't

think I had the right mentality to go win a championship," said Jones. "I think at that point we were just focused on winning races."

"I kind of switched my mentality to the point of take the wins when we can get them, but we need to take these seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths when we can get them, as well, and not try to force anything. The last eight races or even a little bit before that we had a streak of top-10s here all the way to the end. I don't know the exact number it ended up at, but just finished in the top-10, being consistent, being competitive and running up front and contending for wins, that's all we needed to do throughout the rest of the year, and that's what we did."

Jones became the youngest driver in Camping World Truck Series history to win a championship at just 19 years, 5 months and 21 days.

The owner of Jones' No. 14 Toyota is Kyle Busch. It is the first Owner Championship he has won.

Final top-10 points leaders: 1. E. Jones-2. Reddick-884, 3. Crafton-877, 4. Sauter-809, 5. Peters-804, 6. Hayley-866, 7. Hamric-733, 8. Townley-730, 9. Kennedy-690, 10. Gallagher-677.

Racing Trivia Question: Where is Martin Truex Jr.'s hometown?

Last Week's Question: Who will Chase Elliott be driving for in 2016? Answer: He will replace Jeff Gordon at Hendrick Motorsports.

You may contact the Racing Reporter by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com.

Bowling scores

Monday Night Ladies: Nell Rice 181, 189, 182, Monita Rodgers 189, Sarah Chumbley 184, Inez Bergstrom 187.

Blairsville Youth: Savannah Karisny 154, 156, Justin Dunger 104, Nick Love 113, DJ Robbins 120, Eric Fox 118, Jacob Fox 153, Dalton Ayerr 132, Derek Harwood 110, Woo Wooten 91, Mikaela Caldwell 97.

Tuesday Night Church League: Joe Rumpfelt 172, 160, Sarah Pawli 165, Rob Pawli 174, Charlie Reynor 163, 227, Carolyn Roy 127, Brian Roy 126, Curtis Brown 130.

Young at Heart Seniors: Bruce Burnett 203, 193, Ken Thigpen 190, Claudia Har-

ison 194, Bob Landis 213, 105, 209, Nell Brown 188, Dewey Allen 216, 195, Ines Bergstrom 196, Don Ransom 183, 199, Susan Ganitch 179, 184, 177.

Thursday Night Mixed: Tony Lynch 202, 224, Series 616, Tim McVay 201, 204, Chuck Reeves 274, 222, Series 664, Sarah Chumbley 187, Doug Roberts 204, Dewey Allen 200, 246, Series 638.

UPWARD SPORTS
On-line registration is now open for Upward Indoor Soccer for boys and girls in grades Kindergarten through 8th Grade at www.hopb.org or at www.fumcunioncounty.org. The registration price to participate is \$60, through December 10, 2015, and an additional \$10 will be applied thereafter. Payment plans are available, if needed. Convenient weekly practices commence January 11, 2016, while games will be held every Saturday between January 30 and March 5, 2016.

Registrants should attend the evaluation that will be held on Thursday, December 10, 2015 on a drop-in basis between the hours of 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. at the House of Prayer Family Life Center located behind the sanctuary. For more information regarding registration, contact (706) 745-5925. Information regarding Upward Sports can be found online at www.upward.org.

Skatehealthy and Boards for the Lord Skate Competition

December 12, 2015, 11 a.m., local skaters will take to Meeks Park for the Second Semi-Annual Skatehealthy and Boards for the Lord Skate Competition. The first skate competition was a huge success with skaters from the tri-state area in attendance; this skate competition is expecting to be no different. Skaters of all levels are invited! There will be a beginner, intermediate, and advanced division. This advent is absolutely free to enter!

If you want to sign up, have any questions or would like to sponsor the next event, please call Skip Larson (706) 455-2087 or Ben Newell (706) 994-1656. N(Nov18,27)CA



Ben Newell