

# Six Panthers place at Area Tournament last weekend

## Payton qualifies for Sectionals with fourth place finish

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nganews.com

**Social Circle** - Union County Wrestling placed six wrestlers at the Area Tournament in Social Circle. The performance is the best ever at Area, according to Union Wrestling Coach Michael Smith-Foot.

The highlight of the weekend was Union sophomore Zach Payton placing fourth and qualifying for this weekend's State Sectional Tournament at Greater Atlanta Christian (GAC)

Freshman Brandon Mickens placed sixth at 120 pounds. Freshman Adrian Shaw came in fifth at 126 pounds. Sophomore Noah Bierce was fifth at 145 pounds. Freshman Bryan Nelson finished fifth at 160 pounds. Freshman Grizzly Breedlove took fifth at 152 pounds. And



Union County wrestlers at the Area Tournament last weekend. Six Panthers placed during the tourney.

finally, Payton took home fourth at 182 pounds and qualified for State Sectionals.

If he places in the top four at Sectionals, he will become Union's first wrestler to make it to the State Tournam-

ment in Macon.

"This was a great way to end the season for most of the team, and begin the next season with all but one wrestler returning, plus entering our most talented group of fresh-

man for next year," Coach Smith-Foot said.

"Please congratulate all of the young men that competed this weekend and encourage others to try our sport."

# NASCAR 2015

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

## Petty has reasons for optimism

Richard Petty has reason for optimism heading into the 2015 racing season. His No. 43 car with Aric Almirola behind the wheel won the July race at Daytona, and the organization has moved into larger headquarters.

Almirola will be joined by Sam Hornish, who replaced Marcos Ambrose.

"It was a breakout year for us," said Petty. "I think Sam brings a lot of versatility. Marcos (Ambrose) was super on road courses and stuff, but he never got the hang of being ready. He could have good races and bad races and good times in the races, but I think Sam will be much more consistent with it."

"In our testing, (Hornish and Almirola) both felt the same thing in the car. Whether they'd change the air pressure or they'd change the springs and both of them feel the same thing. With Marcos, he was one way and Aric was the other way and so it was hard to compare them. Now we've got two cars that we can sit down and say, 'OK, you try this and I'll try that and if it works, we'll put it on the other car.' That should be an advantage for all of us."

Richard Petty Motorsports (RPM) is a two-car Sprint Cup Series race team owned by seven-time NASCAR champion Richard Petty and New York businessman Andrew M. Murstein. The team was founded as Everham Motorsports in 2000 by former crew chief Ray Everham, entering full-time competition as a two-car operation in 2001. The organization was renamed Gillett Everham Motorsports in 2007 after former Montreal Canadiens and Liverpool owner George Gillett bought a controlling interest from founder Everham, and took on its current name after merging with Petty's team Petty Enterprises in 2009.

Known for its factory backing from Dodge since its



Rick Hendrick and Richard Petty in 2009

inception, the team switched to Ford in late 2009 and merged with Yates Racing for 2010. The team has the odd distinction of being the result of three successful teams (Everham, Petty, & Yates) merging after falling on hard times.

After funding issues due to the Gillett family's financial woes, in November 2010, an investment group including Andrew M. Murstein and his Medallion Financial Corporation, signed and closed sale on racing assets of Richard Petty Motorsports. Petty, Murstein, and Medallion Financial are the current owners of the team, while Everham and Gillett are no longer involved with the team.

After the 2008 season, turmoil emerged when A.J. Allmendinger and Reed Sorenson were signed to drive for the team, while Elliott Sadler was released from his ride in the 19 car and planned to sue the team to keep his job.

By 2010, RPM's continued operation was put into question when lead driver Kasey Kahne announced his departure by the end of the season. Kahne's decision was in the midst of financial problems for the Gillett family in several of their ventures, which included George Gillett defaulting on a \$90 million loan he had used to purchase the team. With

lackluster performance and rumors from week-to-week that the team would shut down, the chaos peaked in October when RPM's cars for the second Talladega race were briefly confiscated, and again in November when RPM's four team haulers remained parked at Texas Motor Speedway instead of heading to the next race at Phoenix, in both cases due to payment issues with engine and equipment supplier Roush Fenway Racing. The situation was resolved in November, when Richard Petty partnered with Medallion Financial and DGB investments to purchase the team for "less than \$50 million." Petty once again was at the helm of a race team, and retained a one-third stake in the company by investing "several million dollars" of his own money.

Petty, bolstered by a partnership with New York-based Medallion Financial Corporation, bought out Gillett and was back to actually managing a race team and not just merely having his name on the door. Still, the margins were tight, the ledger was red, and the results on the racetrack were lacking.

It remained that way for the next four years, even as Almirola came on board full-time and teammate Marcos Ambrose picked up a pair of road-course wins.

"It was a mighty big hole we were sitting down in," Petty continued. "Instead of getting frustrated, we just kept working and tried to be patient. But anybody who knows me knows that patience isn't exactly my thing."

The team currently fields the No. 9 for Sam Hornish, Jr. and the No. 43 for Aric Almirola in the Sprint Cup Series, and the No. 43 for Dakota Armstrong in the Xfinity Series.

Over the winter, RPM moved into new Mooresville, North Carolina, headquarters that was actually its last HQ as Petty Enterprises. The partner-

ship with Roush Fenway is still in place, but for the first time in years, the team is building its own cars, not waiting on deliveries from elsewhere.

Former Indy 500 champion Sam Hornish Jr. has replaced Ambrose, and last week CEO Brian Moffitt announced that a new sponsorship deal with beverage Twisted Tea will ensure that Hornish will run the entire 2015 season.

### DALE JR. NOT FOCUSED ON RETIREMENT

With Jeff Gordon announcing his retirement at the end of 2015, the attention focused on Dale Earnhardt Jr. and his future plans.

Unlike Gordon, the "R" word isn't in Junior's foreseeable future.

Just last week, he told reporters he would like to expand his driving to include the Truck Series.

"Jeff made his decision based on factors in his life, whether it be his health or his kids," Earnhardt said. "I don't have any back issues and I don't have any kids on the way. I don't have any factors."

Right now, Earnhardt said he can't think about quitting because he's enjoying his job so much. He said the last five years have been the most fun he's ever had driving a race car.

"I didn't even know I could have this much fun," he continued. "Last year, I felt like a kid. I had the same feeling I had when I would drive down to Myrtle Beach with my Late Model. We were just on top of the world having so much fun. That freedom came back in the last couple years to just enjoy it and just release the pressure. So that's made me really think I can do this a lot longer. I think I'll stop racing when my health is an issue or I don't feel like I'm in a competitive car or I feel like I've lost a step."

"I've never driven a truck before and I've always had the interest to race a truck. I'd tell you I would run Martinsville, today, but Cole Whitt's going to get all the shorter tracks due to his age, and we need to get him that experience when we can, and it's a great opportunity at Martinsville for him to run. So if I run a race, it'll be at a bigger track where Cole's not quite cleared to run through NASCAR's process."

**Racing Trivia Question:** How many Cup wins did Richard Petty have during his career?

**Last Week's Question:** Where did Jeff Gordon win his first Cup race? **Answer:** It was the Coca-Cola 600, May 29, 1994 at Charlotte.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at: [www.hodges@race500.com](http://www.hodges@race500.com).

## First place... continued from 12A

A putback by Nalaschi with 23 seconds left in the third made it a 47-41 game. Then with the clock winding down, Nalaschi nailed a trey from the wing just before the buzzer sounded.

With one quarter left, the Lady Panthers gave Rabun a taste of its own medicine with a barrage in the final minutes to turn a 13-point hole into a very manageable three-point deficit.

One minute into the fourth quarter, Nalaschi connected on another three to knot the score, then thirty seconds later, Day hit 2-of-2 at the line to put Union back on top, 49-47.

The Lady Panthers were dealt a serious blow when Nalaschi fouled out with 5:33 to play. Coach Tucker would turn to junior Stephanie Busse, who definitely made her presence known in the paint - blocking Rabun five shots in the final five-plus minutes of the game.

Coach Tucker would also turn to his four-corner offense to drain the clock in the final minutes. But nursing a two-point lead with more than five minutes left, he took a huge gamble that paid off big time when fatigue set in on Rabun's defense and they began fouling instead of chasing the Lady Panthers back-and-forth across the court for minutes at a time.

At the 4:49 mark, Holly Stroman came through with two clutch free throws.

With her team up 51-47, Busse came through with her first blocked shot, resulting in one free throw by Lane Colwell.

With 4:14 remaining, Union led 52-47. At the 3:30 mark, Day was fouled and hit 1-of-2 for a 53-47 lead.

Seconds later, Busse blocked another shot and Stroman was fouled and the sophomore hit 2-of-2 at the 3:13 mark

to extend the lead to 55-47.

Maddox hit one free throw just inside the three-minute mark before Rabun scored on a putback with 1:58 remaining to trim the Union advantage to 56-49.

The Lady Cats forced another turnover that resulted in a trey and a 56-52 game with 1:26 left. Once again, Union turned it over but Day came up with a huge steal and hit 2-of-2 at the stripe.

Busse blocked three more shots between the 52-second mark and the 21-second mark. Maddox went 1-for-2 at the line to give her Lady Panther a 59-52.

Maddox was intentionally fouled with 6 seconds left and she hit both free throws. She was then fouled again three seconds later, and she hit both to make it 63-52 final.

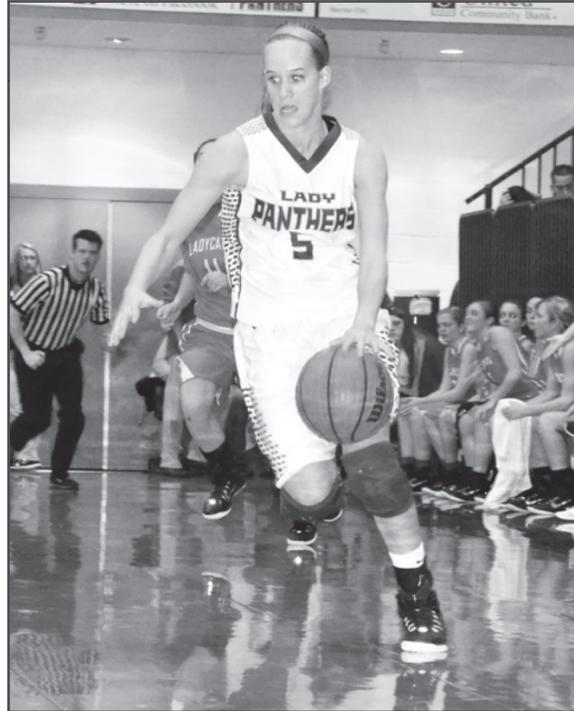
The Lady Panthers hit 16-of-20 at the foul line in the fourth quarter to go along with a 26-for-35 performance for the game.

**SCORING:** Nalaschi 24, Day 14, Maddox 11, La Colwell 5, Coyne 4, Lariscy 3. **REBOUNDING:** Nalaschi 10, La Colwell 9, Maddox 4, Stroman 4, Day 3, Coyne 2, Busse 1. **ASSISTS:** Coyne 5, Stroman 3, Day 2, Colwell 2, Lariscy 1. **STEALS:** La Colwell 5, Maddox 2, Stroman 2, Day 1, Coyne 1. **BLOCKS:** Busse 5, Stroman 2, Maddox 1, La Colwell 1.

### Lady Panthers 56 Washington Wilkes 24

**Washington** - The Lady Panthers led 20-2 after one 37-9 at the half, and 50-10 after three. Union extended its winning streak to seven games.

**SCORING:** Day 15, Nalaschi 11, Maddox 10, La Colwell 8, Stroman 4, Coyne 3, Young 3, Daniel 2



Kim Coyne dribbles up the court during the second half of Union's win over Rabun.

## 2014-15 Region 8-AA Ladies Basketball Standings

School Name	W-L	PF	PA	GB	Overall
Union County	8-1	532	309	--	17-5
Rabun County	7-1	512	302	.5	12-9
Wash Wilkes	4-4	352	428	3.5	14-8
Oglethorpe Co.	4-5	398	488	4.0	11-13
Greene County	1-6	258	384	5.5	5-17
Social Circle	1-8	363	504	7.0	7-10

# 2015 DIZZY DEAN 2015

## Baseball and Softball

### Sign up Ages 5 thru 14

#### Jan 19th until Feb 27th

You can sign up and pay online at [www.unioncountyyga.gov](http://www.unioncountyyga.gov)

or you can stop by the Recreation Office at:

310 Wellborn Street  
Blairsville GA, 30512

For any questions or further information you can look on-line at [www.unioncountyyga.gov](http://www.unioncountyyga.gov) or call 706-439-6074

# Daddy Daughter Dance

**WHEN:** February 7, 2015 6PM-9PM

**WHERE:** North Georgia Technical College

**COST:** \$50.00 per couple - \$10 for each additional Daughter

Dinner is included and Limo rides are available on a first come first serve basis.

Tickets are available at the Union County Recreation Office at 310 Wellborn St.  
For any questions call (706) 781-0990

# No Greater LOVE

## 5K RACE & 1 Mile Walk

### February 14, 2015

Start this Valentine's Day giving the gift of love. Join "TEAM TRICIA"

Tricia Spear has been giving back to this community, day after day for over a dozen years. Now she is fighting a serious illness and she needs all of us to help with her recovery.

Join us and participate in the 5k Race or the 1 Mile Walk  
Place : Meeks Park, Blairsville 9am/Registration 10am/Race-Walk

**Registration Fees** RUN \$25 WALK \$20  
All registrants will get a free Race T-Shirt, while supply lasts. Pre-register by January 27th to be guaranteed a Race T-shirt.

Registration Forms available online at [Active.com](http://Active.com) or pick one up at Blairsville Chamber of Commerce, Seasons Inn, Mountain Shelter Thrift Store (Blairsville) or the Union General Wellness Center

Interested in being a sponsor and having your business listed on the T-Shirts? Call the Thrift Store at 706-745-0033 by Jan. 27th

The monies raised at this event will go to the Tricia Spear Recovery Fund.

Visit our event Page, No Greater Love 5k.

### Galaxy Bowling Scores

<b>Monday Night Ladies:</b> Linda Nichols 193	<b>Farmer League:</b> Paul Napolitano 202, Dewey Allen 211, Del Neiffer 203, 212, Mel White 243, Ron Wingate 205, Ken Thigpen 243, Mo Rodgers 231, Ron Gaucher 196
<b>Men:</b> Bob Brown 208, Larry Canaan 227, 227, 234, Mike Davis 235, 214, 200, Gary Brown 215, 204, 247, Taz Matetzschk 206, BJ Gilbert 225, 266, 257, 748 Series, DJ DeJoseph 200, 225, Jay Burrell 215, 242, Brett Hogsted 205, Johnathan Everett 234, 201, John Stevens 216, Ray Everett 222, 219, Jeb Plott 233, 204, Jason Swanson 252, Bob Bischoff 222, Russ Southcott 226, 224, 206, Curtis com 206, Dewey Allen 207, Bill Smith 224, Del Neiffer 217, 234, Joe Teague 212 Hazel	<b>Thursday Night Fun League:</b> : Dewey Allen 228, Mark Silvers 208, DJ DeJoseph 248, 246, John Moore 216, Denise Baldwin 200, 234, Zach Moore 208, Tim Moore 247, 268, 195, 710 Series, Taz Matetzschk 224, 213, Johnathan Everett 247, Tony Lynch 203, 255, Ray Everett 210, 203, Chuck Reeves 220, Russ Southcott 227, 215, 259, 701 Series, Jerry Thomas 201, 209, Pam Clark 214