

# Sports

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## Track and field: Underwood third at State; UCHS breaks two school records

By Todd Forrest  
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**Powder Springs** - Senior Noah Underwood headlined Union County's week with a third-place performance in the shot put event at the Class AA Track and Field State Championships hosted by McEachern High School.

Underwood's bronze medal distance of 45-feet, 8 inches set a new school record, topping last week's record-setting throw of 42-10 by almost three feet.

He also turned in a career-best distance in the discus with a toss of 122-1 - good enough for seventh in Class AA.

The men's 4x800 relay crossed the finish line in 8 minutes, 34.84 seconds to place fourth. The 4x800 team includes Luke Gambrell, Hunter Payne, Daniel Griggs, Hunter Hartzog, Zander Rotko and Brady Guild.

Speaking of Hartzog, the junior distance runner turned in a pair of top-10 performances, highlighted by a sixth-place finish in the 800-meter with a time of 2:00.58. He placed 10th in the 1600M race at 4:49.89.

The Union ladies placed



Coach Beau Kelley and the Union County track and field team set two school records and placed seven athletes in the top-10 during last week's State Championships at McEachern High School. Photo/Todd Forrest

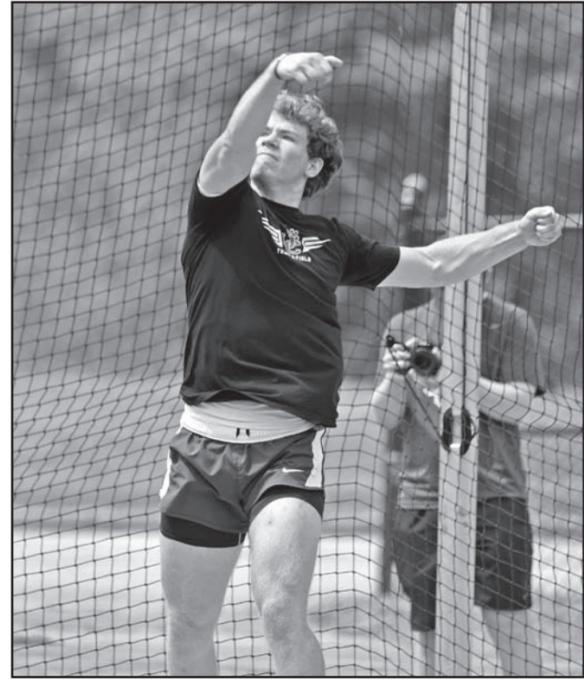
sixth in the 4x800 relay race, clocking in at 11:02.74 to break their own school record set last week at Sectionals (11:16.96).

Gambrell placed seventh in the 3200M race, crossing the finish line at 10:12.70.

Junior Hannah Gregory placed 12th in the 1600M at

5:58.48 and junior Riley Allison was 11th in the girl's high jump finals at 4-8. Allison cleared 5-feet at State, leaving Allison as a clear-cut title contender for 2022.

Other Panthers competing were Hannah Long in the girl's 100M, Allie Brey in the girl's 800M, Linley Jones in the 300 hurdles and Trace Wright



Senior Noah Underwood set a school record and signed a football scholarship with Berry (story upcoming) last week. Photo/Todd Forrest

in the boy's 400M. The 4x400 girls relay team was also eliminated in the prelims.

In all, Union County saved its best for last in nine different events, posting season-bests nine different times at the Championship meet.

Gregory (800M), the

4x400 and 4x800 all turned in their best times of 2021 on the female side.

Along with Underwood's two top 10s, Hartzog (800M), Gambrell (3200M) and the 4x800 relay team all clocked season-low times last week.

## Senior Will Potts picks his way to Johnson City, takes aim at Music Row

By Todd Forrest  
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If only these kinds of opportunities were around for fellow Georgians back when young Johnny out-fiddled the devil.

Union County senior Will Potts will be afforded the rare opportunity to attend college on a bluegrass music scholarship when he attends East Tennessee State (ETSU) this fall. ETSU is the only four-year university in the country offering Bluegrass, Old-Time and Country Music studies for college students, and Potts was one of the fortunate musicians to receive an invite into the selective program.

"About a year ago we started looking for schools that went my bluegrass [dreams]," Potts said. "We heard a lot of great things about East Tennessee State and I decided that's where I want to go."

Shortly thereafter, Potts visited the Johnson City campus and received an up-close look at the program.

"They talk about how they're a public school that has a private-school feel and that's something that I really liked, and all the instructors and everyone, they all seemed like really great people," he said. "[A Bluegrass music program] is something that you just can't find at other schools, which makes it that much more difficult to get into. But knowing all that means



Flanked by his parents, Will Potts puts pen to paper, marking the first step of his musical journey. Photo/Todd Forrest

[the program] is just that much better."

Potts' wide array of musical talents range from stringed instruments to horns, however, he expects to concentrate on guitar and bass at ETSU. And if all goes to plan, his journey will take him across the Volunteer State to Nashville after graduation, where he hopes to find work as a session or touring musician.

"I want to get better and learn different and harder techniques," he said. "I also want to learn more about the industry side of music and become a better overall musician."

Union County principal CT Hussion and band director Will Stafford praised Potts' leadership during his time at UCHS and with the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band.

"He's an old soul and he's been a leader throughout his entire time here," Hussion said. "I remember when he was

a freshman, I looked at him and thought he was a junior. It makes me sad to see folks leave, but I'm also proud of them. Now this will open a door for someone else to step up into a leadership role."

Stafford echoed his principal's sentiment.

"[Potts] just kind of assumed the leadership role," he said. "He created his own position as soon as he arrived. He took over the loading crew, the logistics and the sound system with our band. There is so much that he does, you just have to call it the 'Will Potts position.' We're going to really miss him next year because I don't think people realize just how much he does behind the scenes."

According to the school's website, the ETSU Bluegrass, Old-Time and Country Music program is the oldest established program of its kind at any four-year institution.

## Hensley joins YHC theater program with dreams of Broadway stardom

By Todd Forrest  
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In a journey that began last year in Hayesville, North Carolina, Jody Hensley's acting chops are taking the Union County senior to Young Harris College this fall where he is pursuing a Theater Arts degree.

Hensley's story got underway last October involving a Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time - a play starring Hensley at the Peacock Playhouse. In the audience that night at the Peacock was David Weber, Young Harris College's Adjunct Professor of Theater, who immediately liked what he saw in Hensley and invited him to attend private classes.

At the time, Hensley had his eyes on sunny California as his leading college destination, but when the state's rigid COVID-19 restrictions tossed a wrench into those plans, Weber helped steer Hensley to YHC.

"My first choice was actually UCLA, specifically the Long Beach campus, but they weren't taking out-of-state students due to COVID," Hensley said. "So, the plan is to go to Young Harris then possibly transfer [to UCLA] in a year or two."

"But Young Harris is a great school. It's a beautiful campus with a phenomenal view and you can tell [the professors] are really passionate about teaching. They definitely have an environment over there that's set up to help you succeed."

Whether he accepts his diploma on the west coast or in northeast Georgia, Hensley's dream eventually takes him to New York City. However, he'll always miss the tranquility that comes with life in the Blue Ridge mountains.

"The hope is Broadway; the big time," he said. "I want to do this professionally."

"No matter what, I'll always miss how peaceful [Union County] is," he said. "There



Top: Union County senior Jody Hensley signs a scholarship to Young Harris College alongside his family on Wednesday, May 12 at the UCHS Fine Arts Center. Bottom: Hensley is joined by UCHS theater teacher Chris Adams. Photos by Todd Forrest



Top: Union County senior Jody Hensley signs a scholarship to Young Harris College alongside his family on Wednesday, May 12 at the UCHS Fine Arts Center. Bottom: Hensley is joined by UCHS theater teacher Chris Adams. Photos by Todd Forrest

aren't many places where you can just sit back and find a moment of peace, and this is definitely a place where you can."

Hensley offered a shout out to his family, teachers and his friends for helping him accomplish the first step of his lifelong dream.

"I want to thank my parents for supporting me my whole life, my friend (Taylor Walls) for being such a great friend and my teacher Mr. (Chris) Adams for giving me the chance to be on stage because I was always scared [when I first began]."

Adams explained how Hensley approaches each role and how heavily invested he

becomes, a trait that separates the actor from the rest of the pack.

"The best thing about Jody is, he brings characters to life better than anyone I've ever had," Adams said. "He enjoys getting the script and figuring out, not only the best way to play the part, but how to bring extra life to what he's doing."

**UCHS signing update:** Along with the college signings of Hensley and Potts, seniors Cale Winkler (YHC) and Noah Underwood (Berry) also made their selections last Wednesday. Those articles and photos will be featured in next week's North Georgia News.



Will Potts and friends (which is actually a great title for a bluegrass compilation album) during his signing ceremony at the UCHS Fine Arts Center last Wednesday. Photo/Todd Forrest

## Class of 2022 seizes UCHS Ulympics title



Top: The juniors (Class of 22) celebrate their narrow upset victory over the seniors during the 2021 Union County High School Ulympics. Bottom: Principal CT Hussion announces the winning class. The juniors' victory shouldn't be regarded as a major upset considering they came in second as freshmen during the last Ulympics in 2019. The decade-old brainchild of Hussion, the Ulympics are a year-long competition between the four classes that issues points for school spirit, good grades/behavior and avoiding library/lunchroom fines, among other things. The Ulympics culminate in May with athletic and academic competitions in a variety of sports/subjects before the points are totaled and a winner is declared. This year, the seniors claimed the Academic Cup and the juniors won the Athletic Cup, however, the year-long tally put the juniors over the top. "By far, the most important thing was to be able to [host the Ulympics this year]," Hussion said. "It is very important to our kids, the school culture, and tradition. It is an important step towards getting back to normal." Photos/submitted

## Ms. McCarter's second-grade class crowned 2021 UCPS Battle Ball champs



Every May, Union County Primary School and physical education teacher Chris Robbins host a second-grade Battle Ball tournament to crown a class champion. This year the title went to Ms. McCarter's class after defeating Ms. Varner's class in the finals. Photos/submitted

## Woody Gap Band of Steel concert photos... continued from Page 3A



Band of Steel Photos by Todd Forrest



## Local Racing Report: Tucker Anderson returns to victory lane at Tri-County

By Blake Lynch  
North Georgia News  
Racing Reporter

**Brasstown, NC** - The fourth race of the season at Tri-County Racetrack was held on Friday, May 14 with a \$1,000 top prize in the 602 Red Clay Series.

**Beginner 602:** No. 22 Tucker Anderson of Blairsville took home the win. No. 100 Copper Twiggs took home second place. No. 55 Brad Sosebee was third. No. 28 Roy Hardman took fourth place. No. 117 Dylan Beaver came in fifth place.

**FWD:** Blairsville's own 15-year old Robby Lynch (No. 192R) took home his first win of the season. No. J3 Josh Dease came in second place. No. 24 John Burnette took home third. No. J4 Josh Smith came in fourth place. No. 10 Blake Lynch took home fifth place.

**Street Stock:** Murphy, North Carolina's own Roger Beaver took home the win in his No. 12 car. No. 21 Troy Turner came in second place. No. 36 Eric Farnham took home third place. No. 95 Alex Vance took home fourth place. No. 1 Logan Johnson placed fifth.

**Modified Hobby:** No. 41 Jake Green took the checkered flag with No. 71 Nick Seller in his rearview mirror. No. 24 Seth Wimpey took home third place. No. 25H Jacob Hamby took home fourth place and No. 4 Jacob Paris rounded out the top five.

**Pony:** No. 4M Marty King took home the win. No. T1 Shawn Tenpenny took home second. No. 01 Phil



No. 38 Jamie Oliver placed third in the Super Late Model series. Wood picked up a third place finish.

**Crate:** "The Real Deal" No. 7 Jason Deal took home the win again this week. No. 4 Danny Ledford came in second place. No. 55 Kip Cochran took home third place. No. 12 Drew Deaver took home fourth place. No. 14 Sylan Schutte notched a top-five.

**Super Late Model:** Murphy's No. 8 David Payne took the checked flag for the win. No. X15 Shawn Chastain took home second place. No. 38 Jamie Oliver finished in third place. No. 4 Danny Ledford took home fourth place. No. 34 Glen Barnett came in fifth place.

Tri-County's next race is scheduled for Thursday May 27. Come out and support your local track and hometown drivers.

**Meeks Park pool will open Saturday, May 29, 2021 for the season!**

The pool will be open daily 12 PM-6 PM \$5 per person, children 5 and under are free.



Family season passes for up to 5 members in a household or single person membership will be available to purchase at the Union County Sports Center May 17th or at the pool when it opens. Please call 706-439-6074 with any questions.