

Sports

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Panthers collect first Region 8-AA victory, 88-47 at Riverside

Upcoming week features full slate: Fannin and White at home, Rabun on the road

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Gainesville - Union County kept pace with the pack in 8-AA with Thursday's blowout victory at Riverside Military Academy (0-10, 0-2).

With the win, the Panthers (7-10, 1-2) remain one game back of second-place Banks County (6-14, 2-1) while staying within striking distance of Friday night's opponent, first-place Rabun County (14-5, 2-0).

Union County jumped out to early leads of 34-10 after one and 54-23 at the break as 13 different Panthers cracked the scoring column, led by 16 points from senior Landon Kight.

Senior Lake Hughes scored all of his 11 points in the first quarter, while freshman Houston Henry, senior Hayden Payne and junior Eli Underwood added 9 points each.

Freshman Jude Ellis chipped in seven -- all during the first period -- and fellow ninth-grader Maddox Young scored a career-high 6 points. Sophomore Braylen Rader and senior Austin Taylor finished with five apiece. Freshman Hayden Hughes had four.

Seven different Panthers scored during the third frame and Union County extended its margin to 73-37, hitting 6 of 10 at the charity stripe during the quarter.

Hayden Hughes, Rader and Young combined for all of their squad's 15 fourth-quarter points, helping the Panthers outscore the Eagles 15-10 during the final frame.

Union's 88-point output is the highest total under head coach Corey Garrett and the most by any Panthers team in at least a decade.

Their 41-point margin of victory is also the largest under Garrett and marks the program's most lopsided win since Dec. 27, 2017 when Union County defeated Piedmont, Alabama, 69-27 in the Battle of the States Christmas Tournament.

The Panthers opened



Senior Landon Kight is averaging almost 13 points a game since returning from injury, including 16 at RMA last week. Photo/Todd Forrest

its 88-point evening with 34 in the opening frame behind 11 from Lake Hughes, seven from Ellis and six by Kight. In all, seven Panthers cracked the scoring column during the first eight minutes with four treys and 5-of-6 shooting at the line.

Henry scored five, Taylor and Payne had two apiece and Underwood hit a free throw in the first period.

Payne and Kight poured in a half-dozen each in the second to pace Union to a 54-23 halftime advantage. Daniel Snow (3), Henry (2) and Underwood (3) also chipped in during the 20-point second frame.

The post duo of Kight (4) and Underwood (5) did most of the heavy lifting in the third, combining for nine of the team's 19 points. Senior Caleb John got on the board with 3 points in the frame and Taylor knocked down a triple. Henry hit 2 of 2 at the line, Payne went 1 for 2 and sophomore Caiden Tanner sank 1 of 3.

Up 73-37, the fourth quarter belonged to the reserves with Young connecting on three baskets. Rader hit a trey and a deuce and Hayden Hughes added two buckets.



L-R: Seniors Lake Hughes, Caleb John, Austin Taylor and Daniel Snow will be among the UCHS players recognized during Tuesday's Senior Night festivities. Photo/Todd Forrest

On Friday, Union County will visit No. 4 Rabun County, who is fresh off a 51-47 win over top-ranked Elbert County. (The updated rankings were unavailable as of the Monday morning deadline).

With a win at Rabun, where the Lady Panthers haven't won since 2009, Union County would move into a three-way tie for first in Region 8-AA, assuming Rabun takes care of business on Tuesday vs. Banks County.

The Lady Panthers' week wraps up with White County on Saturday. Union County rallied past the Warriors 75-66 back on Dec. 3 despite trailing by as many as eight during the fourth.

The trio of Ava Hunter, Rebekah Chambers and Lara Turner combined for 58 points while Corinne Hill added 11 points.

Tuesday's Senior Night matchup with Fannin County will tip at 6 p.m. The Friday night trip to Tiger gets underway at 7 p.m.

Saturday's Homecoming contest with White County will get underway at 4 p.m.

The month of February opens with Banks County



Senior Hayden Payne celebrates after beating the halftime buzzer with a tip-in during a win over Commerce earlier this month. Photo/Todd Forrest

on Feb. 1 followed by a trip to Elbert County on Friday, Feb. 4.

Union County will host Rabun Gap on Tuesday, Feb. 8.

Schedule update: The canceled Jan. 15 Region 8-AA contest vs. Elbert County has been rescheduled for Feb. 10 - varsity only.



Ava Hunter and the Lady Panthers will host No. 2 Fannin County on Tuesday before visiting No. 4 Rabun County on Friday. Union still has two meetings remaining with No. 1 Elbert County. Photo/Todd Forrest

B-Ball Homecoming King and Queen to be crowned Saturday



Union County High School will crown a 2022 Basketball Homecoming King and Queen during Saturday's games vs. White County. The Homecoming King representatives are Larry Blackwell, Jude Ellis, Hunter Fleming, Brady Guild, Kendon Hemphill, Houston Henry, Caleb John, Landon Kight, Reece Manders, Easton Sosensky and Eli Underwood. The Homecoming Queen representatives are Bailey Adams, Hensley Adams, Aubrie Banton, Allie Brey, Emily Byers, Hana Gregory, Haleigh Helcher, Ariel McCarter, Natalie Payne, Jaycee Seabolt and Morgan Warren.

Union County Swimming results: Nov. 6

Hazardous driving conditions resulted in another cancellation for Union's swimmers. Here's some early season results.

Most are unaware of the competitive UCHS and UCMS swim teams our school fields, mainly due to all our competition being held outside of Union County.

However, there are some incredibly talented athletes that deserve some recognition for all their hard work, efforts, and determination preparing for their season.

Historically, the UCHS swim team has competed at all levels, to include State and Regional Championships: this year is no different. The first swim meet of the year, the Rockin' Raider Meet, took place on Nov. 6 at the Habersham Natatorium.

With 12 schools represented, the Panthers showed their pride with these results:

Overall High School:

Fourth; Overall Men's: Fourth; Overall Women's: Sixth
 Overall Middle School: Second; Overall Boy's: Second; Overall Girl's: Fourth.
UCHS Men's Results:
 200 Medley Relay: Fourth place.
 200 Freestyle Relay: Fourth place.
 100 Freestyle (24 competitors): Hunter White - second / State qualifier; Nicholas Nushtayev - 10th; Caputi - 19th; Perren - 29th; Panter - 38th.
UCHS Women's Results:

500 Freestyle: Rachel Reid - third
 200 Medley Relay: Fifth
 200 Freestyle (15 competitors): Lily Helton - fifth.
 200 Freestyle Relay: Eighth

and 12th place.
 100 Butterfly (Eight competitors): Helton - sixth.
 100 Backstroke (24 competitors): Lilly Collins - 15th; Cassie Flowers - 19th.
 100 Freestyle (34 competitors): Courtney Foster - ninth; Grace Cook - 12th; Olivia Loyd - 13th; Anniston Howse - 20th; Hannah Kazmierzak - 28th.
 100 Breaststroke (23 competitors): Reid - eighth; Meghan Cory - 15th; Brooklyn Brown - 15th; Loyd - 17th; Kazmierzak - 18th.
 50Y Freestyle (53 competitors): Foster - 13th; Cook - 18th; Howse - 25th; Collins - 35th; Cory - 36th; Brown - 41st; Cassie Flowers - 43rd.

UCMS Boy's Results:
 200 Medley Relay: Second place.
 200 Freestyle Relay: Second place.
 100 Individual Medley: Eli Gwynn - fourth.

50 Butterfly (Eight competitors) - Andrew Nushtayev - second.
 50 Backstroke - Andrew Farmer - fourth; Ian Lander - sixth; Wyatt Chandler - eighth.
 50 Freestyle (14 competitors): Andrew Nushtayev - first; Gwynn - third; Lander - sixth; Farmer - seventh; Chandler - 10th.
UCMS Girl's Results:
 200 Medley Relay: Second place.
 100 Individual Medley: Reese Jones - second.
 100 Freestyle (15 competitors): Isabel Hoover - fourth; Ava Wheeler - fifth.
 50 Backstroke (29 competitors): Clara Kazmierzak - 10th; Samantha Odom - 24th.
 50 Butterfly: Ava Serrano - eighth.
 50 Breaststroke (24 competitors): Jones - fourth; Clara Kazmierzak - sixth; Hoover - ninth; Serrano - 11th; Wheeler - 16th.

Union County Recreation Department Age: 50 and over Spring Session 2022 - Fitness Family Programs



Spring will be here before we know it, and we would love for you to join us for our Spring Fitness Family classes! Union County Recreation Department will be offering all our very popular class options for the Spring 2022 session, and we will be bringing back our popular Yoga class with our new instructor!

Here is a list of all our fitness classes that will be offered for the session:

- Mini-Spinning cardio class (M/W) @ 8:30-9:30 AM - \$10. Spring special
- Regular Aerobics Fitness (T/Th/F) @ 8:30-9:30 AM - \$30.
- Advanced Strength-Core class (M/W/F) @ 9:45-10:45 AM - \$35.
- AM Beginner Pilates-Core class (T/Th) @ 11-11:45 AM - \$35.
- AM Intermediate Step-Aerobics combo (M/W/F) @ 11-11:50 AM - \$45.
- Dance Jams (T/Th) @ 10-10:45 AM - \$40.
- Chair Fitness-Aerobics class (T/W/Th) @ 1:15-2 PM - \$30.
- Zumba Fitness w/Lisa (M/W) @ 8:30-9:30 - \$50.
- Yoga w/Quinn (M/W) @ 12-1 - \$35.
- **PM Zumba Fitness w/Beth @ 5-6 PM (T/Th) - \$50.
- **PM Step-Aerobics combo class @ 5-6 PM (M/W) - \$40.

*Spring Session Registration opens on February 2, 2021, and ends on February 23, 2022, or "when classes fill to capacity". You can register at the New Union County Recreation Sports Center Office located at 519 Industrial Blvd next to the Health Department. Please contact Jennifer at 706-487-4453 with any questions you may have.



Wrestling: Individual Area Championships Friday at Fannin County

Union County wrestling qualified a program-record 10 athletes for State at last year's Area Championships.

This Friday in Blue Ridge, the Panthers have an excellent shot of topping that performance.

The Area 8 Individual Championships get underway Friday at 5 p.m. where Union County will compete against wrestlers from Banks County, Area duels champion Fannin County, Rabun County and Riverside Military Academy.

Weigh-ins are scheduled for 4 p.m. with the competitors hitting the mat around 5 p.m. at the old Fannin County High School gymnasium.

Union placed third at the Area duels earlier this month.



Union senior Sean Phillips (L) after pinning Banks County's Cam Cooper during last month's King of the Mountains finals. Photo/Todd Forrest

NASCAR 2022

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Newman on the sidelines, but not out

Ryan Newman, who raced full-time in the Cup Series from 2002-21, does not have a ride for 2022. But he does not consider himself retired. After being released from the No. 6 Roush Fenway Ford at the end of the 2021 season, he did not throw a retirement or going away party.

He had other plans that would keep him in racing outside of NASCAR.

Newman specifically named dirt late model racing, the Whelen Modified Tour and the USAC Silver Crown as competitions he intends to enter in 2022. He called them "bucket list items (he) missed along the way" through a couple decades in the Cup Series.

Chances are, he will be the same star on those stages that he was this past weekend at the Chili Bowl in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The Chili Bowl specifically is special to Newman because of the partner and team name on his car's panels.

The Indiana Donor Network's program, which raises awareness about organ, tissue and eye donation, launched in 2016 in the wake of IndyCar driver Justin Wilson's on-track accident and death. Race fans began signing up as organ donors in honor of the late driver.

Later that year, another open-wheel driver, National Sprint Car Hall of Famer Bryan Clauson, was killed in an on-track accident. Like Wilson, Clauson saved five lives as an organ donor.

The Driven2SaveLives program continues on in a partnership with Clauson-Marshall Racing, a team Newman bought into as part-owner in 2017. Newman joined the Driven2SaveLives program in 2020 ahead of his Chili Bowl debut.

"The program we have here is pretty amazing," Newman said. "It's an honor to be promoting someone like Bryan Clauson and the legend he was and is."

Newman's car at the 2022 Chili Bowl did not sport his name on it. Instead, it carried the names of other organ donor heroes on his Chili Bowl cars in 2020 and 2021.

Asked why he's back for his third Chili Bowl, Newman looked at his car: "To have what we have herethis weekend, with Cody Brommer's name on the car, to representing someone who was an organ and tissue donor, somebody who saved five lives because of his life, and the difference it makes for so many other people out there."

The next chapter of Newman's career will bring new challenges.

So that's where Newman's career will go from here toward the amusement. It's less of a return to the levels of racing on which he built his NASCAR career and more of a quest to find fulfillment driving midgets, late models and modifieds.

And yes, his family is a factor. As Newman prepared for Friday night's feature at the Chili Bowl, his family helped him strap into his car. When he returned from the race, they were the first to welcome him back.

These moments with Newman surrounded by the people he loves and partnered with teams and sponsors for which he cares deeply will undoubtedly contribute to the fun he plans to have with this portion of his career.



Ryan Newman

Meanwhile, Harrison Burton hopes his first full season in the Cup Series, driving the Wood Brothers No. 21 will be a productive one.

Burton makes the move up from the Xfinity Series, where he spent the last two seasons with Joe Gibbs Racing. While he has made one Cup Series start, the second generation driver is well aware of the steep learning curve ahead, coming from behind the wheel of an Xfinity Series car.

"It's definitely a different race car," Burton said after last week's Next Gen car test at Daytona. "That's for sure, but at the end of the day it's still the same techniques, the same mentality. I thought Daytona in particular was a lot more like the older generation's racing. I think the pack runs that we did were really racy and really competitive and it was challenging."

"The way the cars line up, they're a handful, which is good. It should be harder to drive these race cars and it was a fun weekend, for sure, trying to figure all that out. I got to work with my teammates and race team and I think we made some good progress there."

It's no secret, the Burton name carries a long history in NASCAR racing. Harrison's father, Jeff, and uncle, Ward, combined to win 26 races in the Cup series, while cousin Jeb is finding success in the Xfinity Series. But the youngest Burton now has an opportunity to do what none of them have done before: win a race for NASCAR's longest continually operating team.

A win for Burton and Wood Brothers this season would mark two milestones for the newly formed pairing: the first top-flight victory for Burton and the long-awaited 100th for the Wood Brothers' team. And both have the confidence they can get it done.

"That's the biggest thing is having a team that believes in you, that surrounds you and wants to go to work with you," Burton said. "I've gotten nothing but confidence from the people around me. They believe that we can go and be successful and that's from our crew chief level to the people at Ford, all the way down to just saying 'hi' to the people in the shop. It's nothing but excitement and that's been cool to see."

In Other Racing News: The NASCAR Hall of Fame Class of 2021 was finally inducted. The ceremony was originally scheduled for Feb. 5, 2021 but was postponed due to the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19.

The ceremony, which was held in Charlotte last Friday, was the 12th class inducted into the NASCAR Hall of Fame

since its 2010 inception. It was the first class with three members instead of five. The three inductees were: Dale Earnhardt Jr., Charles "Red" Farmer, and Mike Stefanik.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. is a third-generation NASCAR champion in a family synonymous with the sport. Earnhardt Jr. is among the most popular drivers in NASCAR history. In addition to his 26 Cup Series wins and two Xfinity Series championships, Earnhardt Jr. served as the face of NASCAR for many years with 15 consecutive Most Popular Driver awards.

Red Farmer was part of the original Alabama Gang. Farmer's exact win count is unknown but it's more than 700 and counting. Named one of the 50 Greatest Drivers in 1998, Farmer's immeasurable passion for the sport has kept him racing for decades, even as he approaches 90 years of age.

Mike Stefanik sits atop the list of all-time NASCAR championships with nine. In 2003, Stefanik was named one of the Modified Tour's 10 Greatest Drivers, and he holds the all-time series record in wins, poles, top fives and top 10s.

Racing Joke: Harold's wife accompanied him to the doctor's office. After the check-up the doctor called the wife back into the office alone.

He said, "Your husband is suffering from a very serious disease. Combined with fatigue from his racing, it's causing him tremendous stress. If you don't do the following, your husband will no longer be able to race. Each morning fix him a very healthy breakfast, with lots of proteins. Be very pleasant and keep him in a good mood all the time, especially before meals. For dinner, prepare an especially nice meal for him. Don't burden him with chores, or any of your daily problems. Don't discuss your stress or anything negative. This would probably make him feel worse."

"If you can do this for at least ten months to a year I think he will overcome this condition."

On the way home, Harold asked his wife, "What did the doctor say to you?"

She replied, "You're going to have to give up racing."

Racing Trivia Question: Who was the youngest winner of the Daytona 500?

Last Week's Question: Which team has the most Daytona 500 wins? The Wood Brothers Racing is tops with 14. Petty Enterprises is second with 11.

Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter is a syndicated NASCAR writer and author. You may e-mail him at: hodges@race500.com.

Union County Recreation Department Baseball and Softball Registration

Registration for baseball and softball opens at the Union County Recreation Department January 4, 2022 thru February 18, 2022 for ages 5-14.

Age you will be September 1, 2022 is the age group you will play in. Fee is \$55.00. Please register online at unioncountygga.gov or in person at the Union County Sports Center located at 519 Industrial Blvd. Please call 706-439-6074 with any questions.



Soccer registration is open at the Union County Recreation Department

January 11, 2022- February 18, 2022 for ages 5-12.

Age you will be September 1, 2022 determines age group you play in. Season will begin in March. We are happy to announce Chris Robbins will be overseeing Rec Soccer. Fee is \$55.00

Please register online at unioncountygga.gov or in person at the Union County Sports Center located at 519 Industrial Blvd.

Please call 706-439-6074 with any questions.

