

Baseball: Loyd chooses Emmanuel



The family of senior Hunter Loyd looks on as he confirms his commitment to Emmanuel. Photo/Todd Forrest

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Union County senior first baseman Hunter Loyd inked a scholarship last week with Emmanuel College in Franklin Springs.

Loyd was all smiles as he was surrounded by family, coaches and teammates at the UCHS library on the morning of Tuesday, March 9. Before the Panthers' slugger put pen to paper, Union County baseball coach Zach Odom shared a few words.

"This is something to be proud of and a day that [Loyd] will remember forever," said Odom, who signed with Young Harris College after graduating from UCHS in 2013. "I'm extremely proud of him. Most people [who sign] never forget this day with all your family, friends and teammates being here to support you."

"This biggest thing about Hunter is, not only [is Emmanuel] getting a great baseball player, they are getting a better human being. He is an excellent teammate, he's one of the guys that's constantly picking everyone else up and always has a positive attitude."

After the signing ceremony, the *North Georgia News* spoke with the newest Emmanuel Lion regarding his decision.

NGN: When did Emmanuel first take notice of you, and what do you remember about when you first appeared on each other's radar?

Loyd: I would say they first appeared about a month ago. I was a part of the NCSA, the Next College Student Athletes organization. Through them, [Emmanuel] found me, and we started off with a good connection through the pitching coach, Coach [Brandon] Hennessey. I decided to visit the campus to take a tour, and we hit it off and [Hennessey] offered me a position on the team. We just took it from there and now here we are signing.

NGN: Was there anything in particular about the school or the [baseball] program that caught your attention and really attracted you?

Loyd: Just the great quality of people [at Emmanuel]. It's a Christian-based college and that's what I was looking for. I really felt like I was a part of a family, and they made me feel that way the entire time I was there.

NGN: What are your academic plans? Do you have a major picked out?

Loyd: Academically, I'm looking at animal sciences and biotech in forestry. I love the outdoors and I've always been a part of the agriculture program [at UCHS] and taken every ag class possible. I just love the outdoors and that's something I

want to major in.

NGN: How is Emmanuel's program in that field?

Loyd: Their program in that field is very good and highly recommended. I actually know two students that are a part of that program and it's phenomenal. It's outstanding.

NGN: What was your overall impression of Emmanuel's campus?

Loyd: It's very nice and very quiet. It's not busy and not super big, but it's big enough. You're able to take everything in and I felt really good about it.

NGN: Athletically, what are your baseball goals? Do you have any goals for year one? What about four-year goals?

Loyd: My goal is to get there and immediately work my butt off. I want to work hard so I can continue my career at the next level and the next level beyond that.

NGN: Anyone you'd like to thank or recognize?

Loyd: I want to thank all my friends and family; my head coaches and my assistant coaches. I want to thank my fall and travel ball coaches, Lou Llerandi and Brad Weitzel. They've done an outstanding job, and so have my high school coaches: Coach Odom and Coach [Brock] Gordon. I really appreciate everything they've done.

Loyd is the son of Blairsville's Doug and Rachel Loyd.

Track: UCHS takes home three golds and three silvers, finishes fourth overall at White

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Union County track and field picked up 14 top-three finishes competing against mostly Class AAA and AAAA competition at White County's Ridge Runner Classic on Friday, March 12.

Union placed fourth out of seven teams in the overall standings with 96 points - five points back of third-place Tallulah Falls and five ahead of fifth-place Chestatee.

Union ended the day 49 points up on sixth-place Rabun County and 55.5 ahead of seventh-place Lumpkin County. White County came in first with 146 points; Franklin County was second with 134.5.

Individually, Union County took home three gold medals, three silvers and eight bronzes. The winners from Union included Hana Gregory in the 800-Meter girls' race, with a time of 2 minutes, 37.94 seconds - a season-best.

The girls 4x800 Relay team of Gregory, Campbell Chambers, Allie Brey and Katelynn Rash came in first with a season-best time of 12:02.29.

Rounding out the Union County winners was Noah



Track coach Beau Kelley

Underwood in the boys' Discus at 113-feet, 4 inches. His Shot Put distance of 41-9.5 was the senior's best of the year - good enough for second place.

Elliot Stepps placed second in the boys 100M with a season-best time of 11.72. He was third in the 200M at 24.03. The runner-up boys 4x800 Relay team of Luke Gambrell, Brady Guild, Hunter Hartzog and Zander Rotko also turned in their fastest finish of 2021, coming in second at 9:05.12.

Kanon Abercrombie was third in the Long Jump with a season-high of 19-1.5. Riley Allison's third-place height of 4-6.01 in the High Jump was also a season-best for the junior.

Other third-place finishers

included the girls 4x400 Relay team, clocking in at 4:46.03 - a season-best performance. Lexi Sisum's 13.45 in the girls 100M Dash and her 28.49 in the 200M were both yearly bests.

Hartzog came in third in the 1600M with a season-best finish of 4:45. The boys 4x100 Relay team picked up the bronze with a time of 46.86.

Union County athletes that finished outside the top three but managed to improve on their season records were Allison in the 400M Dash (1:09.72), Gregory in the 1600M (6:15.55), Natalie Payne in the girls 3200M race (14:55.89) and Hannah Long in the girls 100 Hurdles (20.10).

The girls 4x100 Relay team set another season-best pace at 55.01, Mia McCombs recorded a 14-2 in the girls Long Jump and Trinity Queen had a 71-6 in the girls Discus.

Other season-best finishes on the boys' side were Rotko's 400M time of 53.72, Hartzog's 2:03.39 in the 800M, Gambrell's 10:44.16 in the 1600M and Damon Wallace's 21.04 in the 100 Hurdles. The 4x400 Relay team also recorded a season-best 3:41.55.

Union County track and field returns to action on Wednesday at Lumpkin County.

Chambers claims second PBC Pitcher of the Week award



University of North Georgia junior and UCHS graduate Laken Chambers picked up her second consecutive Peach Belt Conference Pitcher of the Week award while extending her scoreless innings streak to 22 1/3.

Baseball: Region competition starts Tuesday with three-game series vs. Elbert

Union enters the week at 4-7 coming off 11-1 loss at No. 9 Franklin County

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Carnesville - Union County's slide reached six games in its only outing last week, committing a season-high eight errors in an 11-1, six-inning loss at Class AAA's ninth-ranked Franklin County on Tuesday, March 9.

The Panthers visited Gilmer on Monday, March 15 (after the weekly deadline) in its final non-region tune-up before 8-AA action gets underway this week with Elbert County.

Senior lefty Zeke Swartz went three innings in the start, eventually finding trouble in the third and falling into a 5-0 hole. After Union got on the board in the top of the fourth, Franklin put the game away with five unearned runs in the bottom half off junior Thomas Dyer, who accounted for both Panther hits and his team's only run.

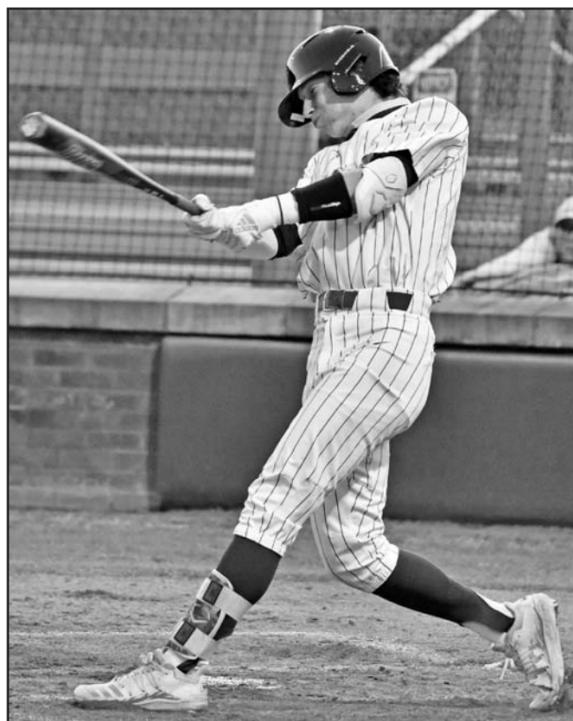
Two errors in the first put Franklin out front 1-0, but Swartz pitched a scoreless second, working around a two-out walk and hit batter. A one-out error spelled trouble in the third as the Lions opened up a 5-0 lead with an RBI double and three consecutive singles.

With two on and one down, a lineout to shortstop Isaak Mullinack ended the inning on an unassisted double play.

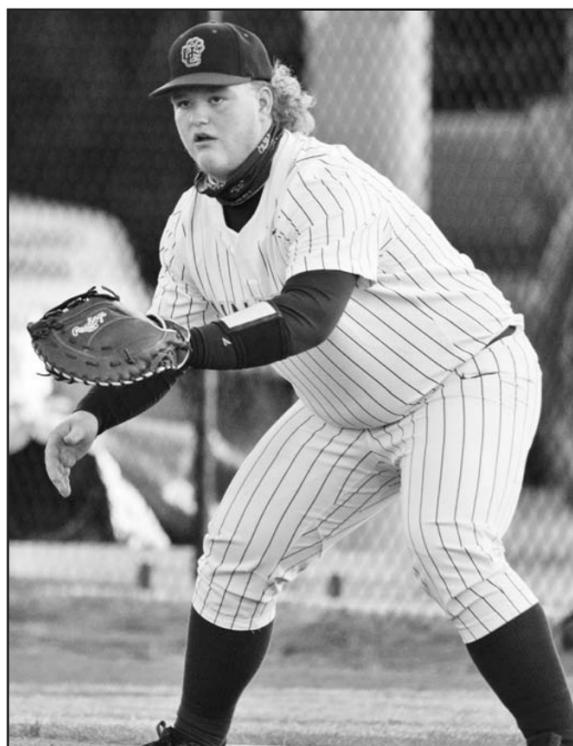
In the Union County half of the fourth, Dyer led off with an opposite-field single and moved to third on a pair of passed balls, allowing Swartz to score him on an RBI ground out.

Four Panther errors and an RBI double off Dyer in the bottom of the fourth proved too much to overcome as Franklin County raced ahead 10-1. Junior Tyler Loyd reached on an error to start the fifth but was stranded on first.

Junior southpaw Lake Hughes tossed a scoreless fifth despite surrendering a two-out single. Dyer began the top half of the sixth inning with his second base hit before three-straight ground outs retired the side.



Thomas Dyer is batting .385 with 3 runs and 3 stolen bases -- all team highs -- over Union County's last five games. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union County senior and Emmanuel College signee Hunter Loyd holds a runner at first base. Photo/Todd Forrest

earned in 1 1/3 innings, yielding 2 hits and recording 2 strikeouts.

Dyer finished 2 for 3 at the dish with a run. Swartz added an RBI ground out during an 0 for 3 day. Hughes drew a pair of walks and stole a base.

Hughes gave up one

#	Roster	GP	PA	AB	H	1B	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	HBP	ROE	FC	CI	BB	SO	AVG	OBP
23	Jace Vinez	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.000	1.000
10	Isaak Mullinack	11	40	27	10	6	2	1	1	7	13	0	2	0	0	11	4	.370	.525
2	Zeke Swartz	11	39	27	10	4	6	0	0	10	4	3	0	0	0	5	7	.370	.514
1	Thomas Dyer	11	39	33	11	9	1	1	0	5	8	2	2	2	0	2	8	.333	.405
44	Damien Chitwood	10	36	31	9	7	2	0	0	6	0	4	2	2	0	0	6	.290	.361
3	Caleb Towe	6	8	8	2	2	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	.250	.250
20	Christopher Fletcher	4	10	8	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	2	.250	.400
36	Bret Ballew	6	15	14	3	3	0	0	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	1	8	.214	.267
4	Connor Shields	10	34	30	5	5	0	0	0	2	4	0	2	3	0	3	8	.167	.242
32	Hunter Loyd	9	31	25	4	4	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	5	7	.160	.323
11	Lake Hughes	4	12	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	2	.143	.500
25	Tyler Loyd	11	30	25	3	2	1	0	0	4	5	2	3	2	0	2	6	.120	.241
8	Bailey Brown	9	14	10	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	3	.100	.357
15	Logan Anderson	5	12	12	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	.083	.083
27	Brayden Sweat	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	.000	.000
5	Hunter Fleming	5	9	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	.000	.333
17	Will Duncan	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	.000	.000
Totals		11	334	268	63	48	12	2	1	43	44	14	11	10	0	41	75	.235	.362

Union County baseball's offensive statistics through 11 games. Stats courtesy of GameChanger

#	Roster	IP	GP	GS	W	L	SV	SVO	BS	SV%	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HBP	ERA	WHIP
2	Zeke Swartz	24.1	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	.000	10	12	5	10	43	5	1.438	.822
10	Isaak Mullinack	16.1	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	.000	13	14	10	8	21	2	4.286	1.286
25	Tyler Loyd	10.0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000	6	14	11	18	8	2	7.700	2.400
1	Thomas Dyer	9.1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	14	19	10	8	6	4	7.500	2.357
11	Lake Hughes	3.2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	3	3	1	4	4	1	1.909	1.909
44	Damien Chitwood	3.0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000	1	3	2	5	4	1	4.667	2.000
4	Connor Shields	1.0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	2	1	0	0	2	0	.000	2.000
17	Will Duncan	0.2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000
Totals		68.1	11	11	0	0	0	0	0	.000	49	66	37	53	88	15	3.790	1.493

Union County baseball's pitching statistics through 11 games. Stats courtesy of GameChanger

Up next: Region play begins Tuesday when the Panthers host Elbert County at 5:55 p.m. The series shifts to Elbert on Friday for a 5 p.m. doubleheader.

With a 9-4 overall mark, Elbert sits just outside the Georgia Dugout Club's Week 4 Class AA Top 10 poll after peaking at No. 9 during weeks 1 and 2.

The Blue Devils opened Region play last week with

three runaway victories over Riverside by a combined tally of 43-1.

Around the Region: After the Elbert series, Union faces 8-5 Banks County, which is also unranked after peaking at No. 8 in Week 1.

The Leopards overcame inconsistent pitching last week to pick up three 8-AA victories over Rabun County - the first by a 6-2 score after rallying from a 2-1 deficit with two

in the fourth and three in the sixth. Game two saw the Leopards issue 12 walks while falling into an early 6-2 hole. Banks grabbed the lead with five in the third and three in the fourth, en route to a 16-8 victory.

The third game was over in five innings, ending with a 10-0 Banks victory that came courtesy of a one-hit shutout and nine strikeouts.