

Sports

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GHSA urges suspension of activities; Union County follows suit

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Thomaston - In a Thursday, March 12 press release, the Georgia High School Association has recommended the suspension of all sports activities in the wake of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The following day, Union County postponed school, as well as all spring sports for a minimum of one week. However, the suspension of athletics could extend into April or beyond with the GHSA suggesting a two-week hiatus.

Within hours of the GHSA announcement, fellow 8-AA members Social Circle and Oglethorpe County shelved all spring sports for two weeks. Union County reached its decision a day later, canceling school for at least one week, beginning Monday, March 16. Also postponed were Friday's baseball doubleheader at Monticello and the soccer matches at Elbert County.

According to the GHSA, the status of the regular season's final weeks will be determined by the end of the day on Friday, March 27.



The two-week delay will cost Panther baseball a minimum of four region games, including last week's Monticello cancellation, as well as non-region contests vs Towns County, West

Hall and Rabun Gap. Union County soccer will table region games vs Oglethorpe County and Social Circle, along with last week's trip to Elbert County.

Union County's golf,

track and Woody Gap tennis will also cancel meets, but in sports where win-loss records don't determine the postseason, the focus will be on restarting before the Area championships

in early May.

Additional info will be published in the *North Georgia News*, at www.nghanews.com or on social media when available.

The GHSA press release is as follows:

Following a statement by Governor Brian Kemp Thursday afternoon, the Georgia High School Association is postponing the State Literary competitions scheduled for March 14 and March 21, and further recommending that all member schools suspend spring sports activities until further notice.

"The regular season belongs to the schools themselves," said Dr. Robin Hines, Executive Director of the GHSA. "We can only recommend that they suspend playing. The final decision will rest with the local school systems, but we hope they heed the Governor's and the GHSA's recommendations."

The GHSA State Literary meets are expected to be made up at a future date. The situation with the remaining spring sports is yet to be determined.

"We will definitely suspend for the next two weeks, as the Governor recommended," said Hines. "By close of business on Friday, March 27, we will issue an update."

"We hate to have to make this call, but we must do what is in the best interest of our student-athletes and fans."

Soccer: Surging Lady Panthers extend winning streak to three

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On the heels of one of its worst starts in program history, the Lady Panthers have responded with three convincing Region victories to move to 3-1 in 8-AA, placing them in a three-way tie for second.

Following a 9-0 thrashing of Monticello on March 6, Union County continued to roll, knocking off Banks County and Putnam County by a combined score of 6-1. However, the Lady Panthers didn't make the trip to Elbert County last Friday, March 13 due to the Coronavirus scare.

Lady Panthers 3, Banks County 0 - In a contest rescheduled from February, Union County blanked the Leopards on Monday, March 9 at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

Two goals from senior Desaray Patterson spotted the Lady Panthers a two-score advantage before fellow-senior Mattison Ruff delivered a late dagger to polish off Banks County, 3-0.

Patterson kicked off the scoring with an unassisted goal in the 14th minute. And thanks to a pair of Sadie Underwood saves, one in the final seconds of the first half, Union County held a 1-0 lead at the intermission.

Leading 2-nil following Patterson's brace, Ruff put the game away with an unassisted goal in the 76th minute.



L-R: Kaylee Helton vs Banks - the freshman scored her first two high school goals at Putnam last week. Sophomore Melia Whitener with a corner kick vs Banks County. Photo/Todd Forrest

Putnam County 1, Lady Panthers 3 - Union traveled to Eatonton on Wednesday, March 11 and came away with a 3-1 victory over the War Eagles.

The Lady Panthers opened the scoring in the fifth minute when Shelby Polling found freshman Kaylee Helton

for her first high school goal. Moments removed from her inaugural goal, Helton notched her first brace when she found the net off a stolen goal kick in the 11th minute, spotting Union a 2-nil advantage.

The lead would remain

safe until a second-half lightning delay forced a stoppage in the 54th minute. Following a 45-minute break, Putnam County got on the board, cutting the margin in half at 2-1 in the 62nd minute.

Patterson iced the match in the 71st minute off a feed



from Ruff. "We went into defensive mode and played the rest of the game behind the ball," coach Tim Hunter said. "Shelby Polling played her best game in high school and Sadie Underwood was stellar in goal."

With the GHSA cancel-

ing all sporting events through at least March 27, Union County's next earliest game could potentially be March 31 vs Pickens. Additional info will be published on social media, in the *North Georgia News* or at www.nghanews.com when available.



Senior Desaray Patterson capped off another productive week for Union County, leading the Lady Panthers to three-straight victories and a second-place tie in Region 8-AA. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union County sophomore Loralei Skinner boots the ball downfield vs Banks County. Skinner and the young Lady Panthers have improved to 3-2-1 after starting the season 0-2-1. Photo/Todd Forrest