

# Local teenager storms into Thunder Valley

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Bristol, TN - Blairsville's Tucker Anderson is well on his way to becoming the next local racing sensation following his strong showing at last month's Bristol Dirt Nationals at the Bristol Motor Speedway.

Behind the wheel in the 602 crate late model class, the 14-year old Union County Middle School student was one of approximately 870 drivers (1,200-plus total) in this division at the start of the week. Beginning on Monday, March 15, Anderson continued advancing until the field was whittled down to 40 drivers. Needing a sixth-place finish to qualify for the main event, Anderson came in 10th in the final heat race.

During Monday's practice sessions, Anderson's best lap times ranged between 19.585 and 19.772 seconds. But when day one of qualifying got underway, Anderson advanced by shaving a few tenths off his fastest practice lap with a 19.318 - good enough for ninth in the day's third heat race.

In his second qualifier at "The World's Fastest Half Mile", Anderson finished 10th with a top lap time of 18.882. On day three, he came in sev-



Union County's own Tucker Anderson took part in the Bristol Dirt Race at the Bristol Motor Speedway last month. Photos by Traci Anderson

enth place during the his heat race, just 3.8 seconds back of the leader. His best lap was a 19.053 but his top-seven performance was enough to move him into the final qualifying session.

In his final race of the week, Anderson placed 10th but continued to improve his times with a quickest lap time of 18.863. His total time of 12:53.023 in the 10-lap sprint was less than 2.5 seconds back of the sixth-place cut-off.

Another local racer, Jon-

athan Davenport, distanced himself from the field on Saturday, March 20 after starting 10th in the 40-lap Super Late Model race. The Blairsville-native passed NASCAR Cup Series star Kyle Larson on lap 25, eventually pulling away by 3.5 seconds.

Most recently, Anderson came in second at the I-75 Raceway in Sweetwater, TN on April 2. Last weekend, he competed locally at Tri-County Racetrack in Brasstown, NC finishing second in both the



heat and feature races. After starting sixth in the heat race, Anderson took the green flag in fourth during the feature event.

However, Anderson already owns a bit of history at Tri-County when, at 10-years old, he became the youngest driver to compete at the track. He also won his first race at the same age - taking the checkered flag in the beginner class at Blue Ridge Motorsports Park.

Anderson credits his grandfather Vinson Sims for

stoking his passion for fast cars. At the age of 5, Anderson became a regular at Tri-County, tagging along with Sims whenever possible. Finally, at 9-years old, with his grandfather's blessing, Anderson moved into the driver's seat and started honing his craft on an empty Tri-County track.

Within a year, Anderson made his first visit to victory lane. Then, according to his mother Traci, his youthful hobby became a full-time passion. Moving up in the ranks

ever since, Anderson started in the Pony division and progressively worked his way up to the current 602 crate division.

While his mother is unsure of where his gifts will steer him next, one thing is certain, racing in Anderson's blood. And whether he's putting those talents to use in Brasstown or Bristol, and racing on four wheels or two, he can be found pushing the limits at every opportunity and moving closer to an exceedingly fast and promising future, one lap at a time.



## Local Racing Results: Tri-County

By Blake Lynch  
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Brasstown, NC - The racing season has begun in the mountains and Tri-County Racetrack hosted its first event of the season.

Friday night was the American Pro-Late Model All-Star Series with \$2500 to the winner. And what a show the drivers gave to the fans.

**Super Late Model:** The Super Late Model win went to Murphy, NC's own No. 38 Jamie Oliver. Second went to No. 17 Kurt English. Shawn Chastain's No. X15 car took home third. David Payne was fourth. No. 86 Jeff Neubert rounded out the top five.

**Modified Hobby :** The Modified Hobby winner was No. 25 Jacob Hamby. Second was No. 37 Michael Barnett. Third went to No. 42 Johnny Galizia. Fourth was No. 4 Jacob Paris. No. 44 Bobby Elkins placed fifth.

**Beginner 602:** The



Blairsville's Tucker Anderson placed second on Friday night.

winner was No. 117 Dillion Beaver. Coming in second was No. 22 Tucker Anderson. Third was No. 192 Jay Lynch. Fourth No. 4 Mark Ledford. Coming in fifth was 71X Shawn Harin.

**Pony:** The winner was No. 407 was Marty King. Second was No. 441 Matt Gerrin. Coming in third was No. 00

Cam Winkler. In fourth place was No. 18 Damien Holt.

**Front Wheel Drive:** No. 232 Jim Exum took the checkered flag. Coming in second was No. 42x Scott Gosnell. Coming in third was No. 10 Blake Lynch. In fourth was No. 7 Shannon Jones. Rounding out the top five was No. 26h John Burnett.

**Street Stock:** No. 95 Alex Vance took home the win. No. 21 Troy Turner was second. No. 44 Chuck Sims came in third. No. 01 Jacob Lynch was fourth and No. 41 Andy Arnes took home fifth.

**Crate 604:** No. 148 Booger Brooks went three-wide to take the lead and the win. Second belonged to 01 Jason Weishan. Third place was No. 3 Carson Ferguson. Fourth was No. 9S Zach Sise. Rounding out the top five was No. 14 Sylvan Schuette.

Tri-County's next race will be on April 23. Come out and support your local drivers that range from ages 12 to 73.

## Baseball... continued from 2B

another coach."

Odom expects at least three seniors to ink baseball scholarships along with Littles' wrestling scholarship to Lakeland University. Hunter Loyd has already signed with Emmanuel, and Mullanack has committed to Piedmont College. Swartz has yet to commit, but according to Odom, it's just a matter of time before the southpaw takes his stuff to the next level.

"From what I understand, he's considering Piedmont, but I definitely believe he will end up somewhere, he's just looking for the right fit."

**Up next:** The Panthers hosted Towns County on Monday after press time. In the previous meeting on March 29, the Indians' duo of junior Collin Crowder and senior Aidan Berrong outlasted Tyler Loyd and Dyer during a 7-5 Towns County victory in Hiwassee.

Tyler Loyd and Dyer limited the Indians to just 5 hits, but six walks, five hit batters, four wild pitches and two costly errors helped Towns County rally from a 4-1 deficit. At the plate, Union left 11 runners aboard and were unable to solve Berrong, who replaced Crowder in the fifth and tossed 2 1/3 innings of one-hit baseball after the Panthers churned out 8 hits over the first 4-plus frames.

Region play resumes on Tuesday at 5:55 p.m. when Union County visits Rabun County (10-8, 4-5) for the first of three games to settle the final two playoff spots in 8-AA. While none of the top-four positions in 8-AA are locked down (No. 6 Elbert County and No. 8 Banks County meet this week for the top two spots), the goals are crystal clear for everyone involved: Win two of three to secure your highest available seed.

Union and Rabun will wrap up the series with Friday's twin bill in Blairsville. The first pitch is scheduled for 5 p.m.

Lumpkin County was scheduled to host Rabun and Union in a doubleheader on Saturday, April 10, but Mother Nature had other plans. Although, the Indians and Wildcats managed to get in three innings before they were canceled with



Senior Hunter Loyd's bat has warmed alongside the weather in recent weeks. Photo/Todd Forrest

Lumpkin County leading 3-1 in the fourth.

Rabun is anchored by seniors Brody Jarrard and Brady Wilson, who lead the team in batting average and are among the top-four in innings pitched. Senior Linkin Wright and junior Grayson Carver round out Rabun's top-four arms.

"I've talked to some coaches and I was actually able to catch a few innings of Rabun-Lumpkin on Saturday," Odom said when asked what he expects from the Wildcats. "I know they are young, but they also have a couple of seniors, like Brady Wilson in the middle of the lineup. It seems like he's been there for eight years.

"They're going to be good," he continued. "[Coach Wesley Satterfield] has done a good job with them in his second year. They're going to be scrappy. But with our arms, if we can hit the ball, we will be fine. We've always had Zeke (Swartz) and Isaak (Mullanack) on our pitching rotation, but I think that adding Lake (Hughes) as a third starter gives us an advantage with our arms. And we're starting to finally turn it on offensively, and now that we're starting to come up with those clutch hits, it's like the flood gates are opening. We hope that our pitching will set

the tone early then someone can deliver that big hit."

In 2019, Carver didn't record a strikeout while losing a 3-2 decision at Union County. The freshman scattered 7 hits and walked two in 6 innings. In the contest, then-sophomores Mullanack and Swartz combined to go hitless off Carver in 6 at-bats. Mullanack reached on Rabun's only error; Swartz got aboard via a fielder's choice.

Carver's counterpart, Mullanack, went the distance, allowing two hits and two runs, courtesy of a two-run homer by Jarrard. The Wildcats' other sophomore starter, Wilson, finished 0 for 3 with a fielder's choice.

In the second game of the 2019 Rabun doubleheader, Swartz turned in a masterful performance during an 8-1 Union County victory. The sophomore allowed just one hit and no walks in 6 innings while fanning Jarrard twice. Wilson also finished hitless, going 0 for 2.

The lone Rabun County hit in game two belonged to then-freshman shortstop Gunner Stockton, who is no longer with the baseball program after becoming the nation's No. 1 ranked dual-threat quarterback in the Class of 2022.

## Gymnastics... continued from 2B

bringing home a pair of runner-up finishes and four top-eight performances. Primeaux and Earley each placed second in their respective divisions with Primeaux recording a vault high score of 9.25. Her 9.4 on the bars and 8.875 on the floor were each good enough for second place, giving her a 36.675 all-around score in AAU Bronze competition.

Earley placed second on the vault (8.85), bars (9.325) and beam (9.4) in AAU Silver for an all-around total of 36.525.

In AAU Gold, Davis placed sixth all-around with a 35.9 score. Her day was highlighted by a third-place score of 9.45 on the bars. Brown was eighth in AAU Gold with a 35.3, turning in a top-five score (9.2) on the beam.

In other action from the Classic City, Lee came in ninth all-around in AAU Silver, Poston finished ninth in USA Level 6 and Mowry was 10th in AAU Bronze. Chambers placed 10th in USA Gold and Patton finished 12th in USA Level 6.

