

Baseball: Panthers and Cavs get reacquainted in first round of State

Union County drops a pair to White County to close regular season

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The Panthers stumbled in their final two regular-season contests, allowing 17 runs to White County in losses on Monday and Friday of last week.

As a result, third-seeded Union County (12-17) enters the Class AA State Tournament on a three-game skid after winning its seven previous outings. The best-of-three first-round series gets underway Thursday with a 5 p.m. doubleheader at No. 7 Callaway (17-9). The if-necessary game would be Friday.

First round trips to Callaway have become commonplace for Union County baseball. This week's visit marks the third time since 1995 the Panthers have begun postseason play in Hogansville. Union took two of three in 1995, but Callaway returned the favor 15 years later.

Panthers 4, White County 10 - In the April 19 home loss to White County, juniors Tyler Loyd, Thomas Dyer and senior Isaaq Mullanack combined to walk a dozen Warriors despite limiting them to five hits.

Led by Dyer's 4-for-4 outing at the dish, the Union offense churned out 11 hits, with four resulting in extra bases. The first three hitters in the Panthers' batting order continuously set the table - going a combined 8 for 11 - for a middle part of the lineup that struggled to do damage. The Panthers' 4 through 7 hitters finished just 2 for 16 overall and 1 of 8 with runners in scoring position.

Loyd allowed only 2 hits but lasted just 2.1 innings in his start, surrendering 8 runs (six earned) on 6 hits and two hit batters. Mullanack took over in the third inning and toed the rubber for what could be his final home appearance as a Panther. The senior right-hander gave up 2 earned runs and walked four batters over 3.2 innings. After allowing 2 runs in the third and a leadoff double to start the fourth, Mullanack settled down to hold White County hitless until handing the ball to Dyer in the seventh.

Dyer capped off four scoreless innings by Union County pitching to end the game, working around two walks with the aid of a 5-4-3 double play. The Panthers' offense didn't fare any better after the third frame when Hunter Loyd doubled and came around to score on Caleb Towe's RBI single, trimming the deficit to 10-4.

White County took advantage of consecutive walks to open the game, jumping out to a 2-0 lead in the top half of the first. Tyler Loyd limited the damage, getting out of trouble with a 6-4-3 double play on the heels of a one-out hit batter.

Union loaded the bases in its half of the inning after Lake Hughes walked and Thomas Dyer reached on a bunt single.



Junior Thomas Dyer enters state as Union's hottest hitter. Photo/Todd Forrest
Zeke Swartz loaded the bags courtesy of a one-out error, but a strikeout and groundout kept the Panthers off the board.

White County tacked on three more in the second despite another Panthers' double-play that negated an early error. But a walk, a booted grounder, a passed ball, a hit-by-pitch and a two-run single opened up a 5-0 lead for the visitors.

Towe took advantage of a Warriors' fielding miscue that sparked a 3-run second, momentarily pulling Union County within two. Towe swiped second but back-to-back Ks had the Panthers on the verge of stranding another runner in scoring position. But after flipping the batting order, the Panthers capitalized on their second look at White County starter Bailee Patterson, beginning with an RBI single to center by the leadoff-hitter Hughes.

Dyer's team-leading second triple of the year scored Hughes, and Mullanack's 10th double of 2021 plated Dyer. But the momentum was short-lived as White County put a 5-spot on the board in the third - extending its margin to 10-3 and ending Tyler Loyd's day after 2 1/3.

With one down in the frame, Loyd was given the hook when his second walk of the inning loaded the bases. Mullanack proceeded to plunk the first batter he faced then induce a sacrifice fly for the second out. But the big blow came from Warriors' senior shortstop J Ben Haynes, who made it a 9-3 game with a two-run triple before coming home on an in-field single.

After Towe scored Hunter Loyd in the Union half of the third, neither team cracked the scoring column for the remainder of the game. Mullanack pitched around a double and a walk to start the fourth and the Panthers wasted a leadoff single from Dyer.

Mullanack loaded the

bags in the fifth with two walks and a hit batter before a grounder to shortstop Conner Shields ended the inning. Tyler Loyd kept the bottom half of the fifth alive with a two-out single, and Bailey Brown followed with a base on balls but both were left stranded. In his final inning on the mound, Mullanack fanned two Warriors and walked one during the sixth.

Dyer opened the bottom of the sixth with a base hit and Mullanack followed with a double, moving two Panthers into scoring position with nobody out. Unfortunately, a line-out to third resulted in a rally-killing unassisted double play.

Dyer stranded two Warriors in the seventh and Union County was a victim of the game's only 1-2-3 inning in its final at-bat.

Dyer tripled, scored and drove in one during his first 4-hit varsity game. Mullanack went 2 for 4 with a pair of doubles and an RBI. Hughes walked, scored and knocked in a run during a 1-for-3 day. Hunter Loyd doubled and scored during a 1-for-4 performance. Tyler Loyd finished 2 for 4 at the dish, giving the junior four hits in his last nine at-bats.

Towe scored and drove in a run while going 1 for 3. Shields reached via a fielder's choice and Brown worked his way aboard on a walk.

Panthers 2, White County 7 - The Panthers were unable to overcome a 7-0 deficit last Friday in Cleveland, falling 7-2 in the regular-season finale.

Swartz suffered his first loss in a start since March 26, giving up 6 hits, 3 walks and 4 earned runs in 3 innings. Hughes didn't issue a walk but allowed 4 hits and 2 earned over 3 innings.

Dyer continued to rake for Union County, going 2 for 3 with a double and a run. The junior finished the final week with 6 hits in 7 at-bats, raising his season batting average from .301 to .344 and his slugging percentage from .337 to .411.



Isaaq Mullanack's .463 average led the team in 2021. Photo/Todd Forrest

Two early walks by Swartz helped White County push two runs across in the first, courtesy of an RBI single and a sacrifice fly. Union failed to break through over the next two innings despite a one-out hit by Hunter Loyd in the second and a leadoff error to begin the third. Still clinging to a 2-0 advantage, Swartz was touched for three runs in the third despite striking out the side. White County used five singles and a hit batter to open up a 5-0 advantage.

The Panthers stranded Dyer at third following a leadoff single to begin the fourth, then a two-run homer off Hughes in the bottom half blew things open at 7-0. The junior lefty worked a perfect fifth then sparked a two-run sixth with a one-out base hit. An opposite-field base hit from Mullanack scored Hughes and a sac fly off the bat of Swartz brought home Mullanack.

A 6-4-3 double play ended the threat in the Warriors' half of the inning, but Union County hit into a twin-killing of its own following a one-out single from Shields.

Shields and Hunter Loyd each finished 1 for 3. Mullanack added an RBI and a stolen base

to his 1-for-3 stat line; Hughes scored during his 1 for 3 day at the plate.

Driving in a run with a sacrifice fly, Swartz struck out five Warriors on the mound. Hughes fanned two during his 44-pitch relief outing.

Union County vs. Callaway (Part 3) - State Tournament play opens Thursday with Union County making its third opening-round trip to Callaway in 26 years. This year's meeting marks the rubber match between the two programs with Union defeating Callaway (then known as Hogansville) in three games back in 1995, igniting the Panthers to a Class A State Runner-Up finish.

Under former head coach C.T. Hussion in 2010, the Panthers -- with current head coach Zach Odom making his first of two state playoff appearances as a player -- ended a 15-year postseason drought but eventually succumbed in three games.

This spring also marks the 16th year for Cavaliers head coach Dusty Hubbard, who was in his fifth season as skipper during the 2010 campaign.

Union and Callaway-Hogansville also met in the 1971

Boys Basketball State Championship game where Hogansville mounted a late rally to win its second-straight title.

'Moore' velocity - With the cancellation of the 2020 season, Callaway enters the postseason off back-to-back final four appearances in 2018 and 2019. However, the Cavs graduated a talented crop of seniors last spring and feature a junior-heavy squad headlined by three-year starter Justin Moore, the team's top arm and cleanup hitter. Packing a 90-mph four-seam fastball that's complemented by an upper 80s two-seamer and a low 70s curve and changeup, Moore fanned 12 batters during a 3-1 loss to top-ranked Bremen on April 2.

In the second game of the doubleheader, freshman Bryce Hubbard tossed five shutout innings in a 4-0 win over the Blue Devils. Junior Tucker Starling, whose heater approaches the mid-80s, tossed the final two innings to preserve the victory.

In its most recent outing, Callaway suffered a 6-5 loss to Heard County on April 20, despite taking the first two meetings vs. the Braves. (Heard County owns a 1-0 early-season victory over Union County.)

Other Cavaliers to watch are junior speedster Jimmy Dukes (OF/RHP), junior Andrew Locke (IF/RHP), senior OF/1B Kaden Rogers and sophomore leadoff hitter CJ Stephens.

The first pitch of Thursday's doubleheader is slated for 5 p.m. If necessary, game three will take place Friday at 3 p.m.

The winner of the Union County at Callaway series will likely visit Region 7-AA's No. 1 seed Pepperell in the Sweet 16. The Panthers traveled to Rome back on Feb. 27 to face Pepperell and Heard County in a Saturday doubleheader. The host Dragons defeated Union County 3-0 before losing 10-4 to Heard County.

A second-round trip to Pepperell would also mark another rematch from Coach Odom's playing days when his Panthers dropped two-straight games in Rome during the 2013 Class AA Sweet 16.



Juniors Lake Hughes and Bailey Brown (8) greet each other as Hughes returns to the dugout after scoring a run in Union's second win over Rabun County earlier this month. Photo/Todd Forrest

Schedule for Region 8-AA Track and Field meet

Homer - The Region 8-AA Track and Field championships get underway Wednesday morning at Banks County High School.

The field event and 1600M winners will be crowned on day one.

At 10 a.m., action begins with the boys shot put, high jump and long jump, along with the girls discus, pole vault and triple jump.

At 11:30 a.m. is the girls shot put, high jump and long jump, and the boys discus, pole



vault and triple jump. The running events begin at 2 p.m. Wednesday with the

1600M finals taking place on day one. Other Wednesday events include semifinals in the 100M, 200M, 400M and 800M, along with the 110 and 300 hurdles.

Beginning at 4 p.m. Friday are the finals in the 4x100, 4x400 and 4x800 relay. The 100M, 200M, 400M, 800M and 3200M races, and the 110 and 300 hurdles.

Rain dates are currently slated for Thursday and/or Saturday.

Local Racing Report: Tri-County

By Blake Lynch
Racing Reporter
North Georgia News

Brasstown, NC - Tri-County Racetrack hosted its second event of the season on April 23 - the Schaffer's Oil Spring National Series with a top prize of \$4,053.

With an unexpected chill in the air accompanying the usual aroma of rubber and racing fuel, fans were treated to a full racing program on Friday night.

Super Late Model: Things quickly heated up when the Super Late Models hit the track, putting on a spectacular show for the home crowd with local driver David Payne taking the checkered flag in his No. 8 car.

Second place went to No. 23 Cory Hedgecock. No.

17M Dale McDowell took home third. No. X15 Shawn Chastain was fourth. No. 7M Donald McIntosh rounded out the top five.

Modified Hobby: The Modified Hobby winner was No. 6 Seth Wimpey, who took home the checkered flag. Second went to No. 2 Bobby Elkins, followed by No. 88 Ricky Smith in third. Fourth belonged to No. 4 Jacob Paris and No. 37 Michael Barnett rounded out the top five.

Beginner 602: The victor was Blairsville's own Tucker Anderson in his No. 22 car. Coming in second was No. 4 Mark Ledford. Third was No. 15 Noah Phillips. Fourth No. 28 Roy Hardman. Coming in fifth was No. 16 Teresa Schumer.

Pony: The winner, No. 4M Marty King, took home the checkered flag for the second-straight race, edging out the No.

F11 car of Caylee Payne. Coming in third was No. 01 Phillip Wood. Placing fourth was No. 4 Kaylee Worley.

Front Wheel Drive: No. J3 Josh Dease picked up the win, holding off a pair of Blairsville boys in the next two spots. Coming in second was No. 192R Robby Lynch, and in third was No. 10 Blake Lynch. In fourth place was No. 35 Kyle Worley. Fifth went to No. 05 Glenn Coker.

Street Stock: No. 12 Roger Beaver from Murphy, NC took home the win. No. 21 Troy Turner came in second and No. J69 Jim Weller took home third. No. 44 Chuck Sims was fourth and No. 36F Eric Farnham came in fifth.

Tri-County's next race will be May 6. Come out and support your local drivers that range from ages 12 to 73.

Rec Volleyball Training

Registration will open on April 21, 2021 at the Union County Sports Center

June 7th, 2021 - July 30th, 2021 for ages 11-14

Classes on Mondays and Fridays

\$55 for all 14 classes or \$5 per class

Beginner and advanced classes

Limited space available

Please register in person at the Union County Sports Center located at 519 Industrial Blvd.

Deadline to register for all classes is May 21, 2021

Please call (706)-439-6074 with any questions



Learn to play Pickleball

Free Beginners Classes every Saturday at 10 a.m. (weather permitting). All equipment is provided and there is no need to sign-up... just come. Courts are located on Chase Drive behind the Health Department.

For more information contact: blairsvillepickleball@gmail.com - N(Apr21,22)CA

Deyton 5K Fun Run/Walk

When: Saturday, May 8, 2021 (9 am to 1 pm)

Where: Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds

Details:

Show your love and support for Greg (Goob) as he is fighting neuroendocrine cancer. After Southwire closed its doors, Greg lost his job and his medical insurance. All proceeds will help pay for doctor appointments, hospital visits and medicines.

- Charity 5K Fun Run/ walk at 9 am pledge of \$30 which includes a shirt! If you would like a t-shirt, please fill out the order form by April 28 using the QR code
- Gospel music/singing (lower campground pavilion)
- Silent Auction (crafts, jewelry, baked good, etc)
- Photography by Aviela - 15 minute mini session of 3 images for \$15 donation
- BBQ plates will be sold for lunch starting at 11 am for \$8/each



Greg (Goob) and Glenda Deyton

My flesh and my heart may fail. But god is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

-Psalms 73:26

