

Sports

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Union County Recreation baseball, softball claim three District 7 titles



The Union County Rec Department's 14U District 7 champion baseball team. Photo/UCRD



The Union County Rec Department's 12U District 7 champion baseball team. Photo/UCRD



The Union County Rec Department's 12U District 7 champion softball team. Photo/UCRD



The Union County Rec Department's 10U District 7 runner-up baseball team. Photo/UCRD

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

The Union County Recreation Department's 12U and 14U baseball teams, along with its 12U softball team, each claimed District 7 titles at their respective tournaments last week.

The 12U Panthers capped off their undefeated run through the tournament by defeating Jefferson 10-3 in the title game, putting the finishing touches on a dominating performance that saw Union County outscore the opposition by a combined total of 71-16 over four games.

The Panthers opened with a 21-1 shellacking of Jackson County on Monday, June 6, followed by a 21-8 beatdown of Lumpkin County later that evening.

Union easily took care

of host Dawson County 19-4 in Friday's semifinals before finishing off the week with its title game victory over Jefferson on Saturday.

Union County advances to next week's GRPA State Tournament in Thomasville.

The 14U Panthers needed only a pair of wins to qualify for the upcoming Class C State Tournament, knocking off host Towns County at last week's District 7 tourney.

The 14U state playoffs begin Tuesday, June 21 at the Jeff Davis Recreation Department. Union County is slated to play Hawkinsville at 8 p.m.

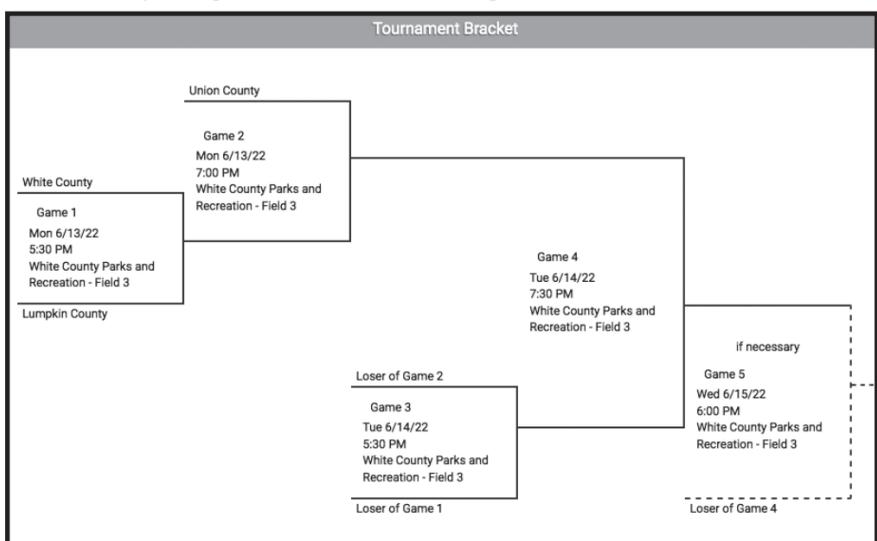
The 12U softball team advanced to state as an automatic qualifier from a one-team district. Like the 14U baseball team, they will travel to Jeff Davis for the GRPA State Tournament.

Meanwhile, the 10U base-

ball team finished as District 7 runner-up during last week's tournament, falling 12-2 to host Lumpkin County in Friday's championship game.

Union opened play on Tuesday, June 7 with a convincing 12-5 victory over Commerce. On Thursday, the Panthers suffered a narrow 8-7 loss to Lumpkin County, dropping Union into the loser's bracket where they played their second straight contest of the day. The Panthers held off Commerce by a 9-6 score but couldn't get going against Lumpkin County the following day.

The 10U softball team opened play on Monday vs. the winner of Lumpkin County and host White County. The title game is Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. with the 'if necessary' game set for 6 p.m. Wednesday.



Union County's 10U softball team began its quest for a State Tournament berth on Monday night in Cleveland where they faced the winner of White County and Lumpkin County. With only three teams, a champion is expected to be crowned by Wednesday. Brackets courtesy of GRPA.org.

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SCAN ME

Men's Basketball: Panthers tune-up for 2023 at Rabun, Towns County camps

Panthers to scrimmage Hayesville and Murphy; Lady Panthers attend UNG camp this week

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Union County men's basketball tipped off its summer camp season last week with visits to Rabun County and Towns County, where the Panthers took part in four games between the two stops along with practices on Monday and Wednesday.

Following Tuesday's trip to Rabun County, which included a JV and varsity game, Union County traveled to Hiwassee for matchups with Rabun, Tallulah Falls and Towns County on Thursday afternoon. This week, the Panthers visited Hayesville, NC on Monday before going to Murphy, NC on Wednesday and hosting Hayesville on Thursday. Union County will take part in the University of North Georgia Camp for three days next week, then finish up Thursday at North Forsyth.

"We've had some guys out for baseball and football, but other than that, [our turnout has] been pretty good," Union County head coach Corey Garrett said. "If we're practicing at the same time as football, I tell them to go to football since it's closer to football season than it is basketball."

After the first week of camps, Garrett's main takeaway is the number of quality shots this team has been able to create, even if most of those good looks haven't ended in points.

"We're getting open shots but we're not hitting them right now," he said. "We've probably shot the ball well in only one of



Union County rising-sophomore Jude Ellis pulls out the Euro step to beat a Rabun County defender 1-on-1 during last Thursday's camp at Towns County. Photo/Todd Forrest

those four games. But like I told the guys, 'that's not the most important thing.' Right now, the most important thing is getting those open shots, we'll worry about hitting them once we get closer to the season. If we're getting open shots that means we're running our offense the right way."

As for the defensive struggles, Garrett wasn't as upbeat concerning the play on that end of the floor.

"It's bad right now, we all know it and the guys know it," he said. "But we haven't hit on [defense] a whole lot this summer, it's pretty much been offense, offense, offense. We just started working on defense Wednesday and it's something that we need to work on more. I told the guys, 'if you want to be good at something, you work at it,' and we haven't worked on it a whole lot right now. So we're going to try and use these next few



Rising-sophomore point guard Houston Henry (2) and rising-senior post Eli Underwood (32) on the defensive end during last Thursday's basketball camp at Towns County. Photo/Todd Forrest

weeks to try and get as good as we can."

Additionally, the camps will provide Union County with an opportunity to log more game-time with a shot clock (35 seconds), which becomes mandatory this winter in all Georgia High School Association-sanctioned basketball games.

"We got surprised by the shot clock once at Towns County, but that's a good thing," Garrett said. "After it happened,

it never happened again. We managed to force a couple of shot clock violations against other teams, but it only happened once to us. I don't think it's going to be a big deal and I don't believe you're going to hear the shot clock go off many times this year. Maybe late in the game, up 8 or 10 with two minutes left, it might be an issue because you can't sit there and hold [the ball], but I've never been a big sit-there-and-hold-it

guy anyway. "I've been trying to learn as much as I possibly can about the certain situations, whether [the shot clock] resets or whether it doesn't, because if you have a sideline out-of-bounds with 6 seconds left [on the shot clock], that's a whole lot different than if you have 30 seconds left. What if you have 2 seconds left? That's a lot different than 6 seconds. You have to have a different playbook for those situations, so from a coaching standpoint, I'm trying to learn as much as possible before the season."

The Panthers return three significant contributors from last season, leaving two starting spots to fill before November. At the moment, Garrett believes he has a few frontrunners for those spots, plus some others that could earn a place in the rotation.

"We're going to be solid, the biggest thing is replacing the vocal senior leadership that we lost from last season," he said. "We just don't have that vocal leader right now and someone needs to step-up and take that role. We definitely have guys capable of doing that and I believe they will."

Union's Wednesday trip to Murphy will tip off at 10 a.m.; Thursday's home scrimmage with Hayesville begins at 5 p.m.

The Lady Panthers and new head coach Brad Cochran open summer camps on Tuesday at the University of North Georgia. Union County will face Dalton (10 a.m.) and Riverwood (1 p.m.) on day one of the three-day camp.

Football: Lifting, practice and 7-on-7 headline a busy June for UCHS

Coaching staff preaches 'accountability' as Perry settles in ahead of year two

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Union County football opened its second summer under head coach Michael Perry on Monday, June 6, before the week culminated on Thursday with a pair of 7-on-7 meetings vs. Andrews, NC and Murphy, NC.

Down a pair of skill players that are still recovering from injury, and a handful of defenders attending another camp, Coach Perry and the Panthers weren't prepared to open up the playbook on Thursday during their loss to Andrews and their last-second victory over Murphy in 7-on-7 action.

"We're doing the best we can [being shorthanded], but I thought Tyler Grasty got better and better as we went on Thursday," Perry said. "He's playing our Y [receiver], the tight end position, and he did some good things for us and scored a couple of times."

"Griff [Young] also made some big plays and is going to



Head coach Michael Perry be a major part of our offense," he added. "But we're still looking for a few other playmakers to step up."

Ahead of Thursday's meeting with outside competition, the Panthers spent three hours together each day from Monday to Wednesday. The first hour is in the weight room before the players hit the field for the final 120 minutes. And regardless of the time of year, whether it's spring, summer or

fall, the coaching staff continues to drive home the same directive each day.

"We still preach the same message that we preach every single day and that's 'accountability,'" Perry said. "With every rep in the weight room and with every rep on the practice field, you're either helping Union County or you're hurting Union County, and that's what we talk about all the time."

Compared to last summer, Perry is feeling more at ease in the Purple and Gold, especially during the recent transition from spring practice to summer workouts.

"It's a whole lot easier this year," he said, "especially coming from spring football. This year, I have all my coaches with me, and from a knowledge and scheme standpoint, we're at a much better place this year compared to last year."

The Panthers will resume their summer schedule this week and will wrap up Thursday with an informal 7-on-7 scrimmage vs. Andrews.



Union County football performs passing drills on Monday, June 6 -- the first day teams were allowed to begin summer practices. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Union County offense is still limited while rising-junior quarterback Cayden Tanner (with ball) recovers from an offseason knee injury. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union County's Brayden Plott (7) jumps in front of a Murphy receiver to pick off a pass in the endzone in last Thursday's 7-on-7 action. Photo/Todd Forrest



Rising-junior tight end Tyler Grasty drew praise from his coach after scoring two touchdowns during Thursday's 7-on-7 contests. His second score tied the game with 22 seconds left vs. Murphy. Union converted the go-ahead PAT moments later then stopped Murphy inside the 10-yard line as time expired. Photo/Todd Forrest

Davenport Wins The Eldora Million



Jonathan Davenport is a millionaire! The Blairsville, Georgia driver pocketed \$1,002,022 for winning the Eldora Million on Thursday night (June 10). After losing the lead twice in the late stages of the race -- once to Tim McCreddie and once to Chris Madden -- Davenport fought back to grab the lead for good on lap 87. The North Georgia News will have more on this story in the coming weeks. Photo by Tyler Carr / eldorasppeedway.com For additional info visit eldorasppeedway.com or jonathandavenport.net.