

Sports

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Mountain Gymnastics Center claims five state titles

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Roswell - Shy'Ann Beasley, Kylee Coggins, Addison Harkins, Addyson Lee and Navaeh Leopold each brought home championships from last month's state gymnastics meet.

Beasley recorded a 9.7 on the beam in AAU Gold competition, finishing eighth overall with a 36.125 all-around total.

A 9.475 on the vault lifted Coggins to an AAU Bronze state title. Her 36.925 overall score was good enough for second place thanks to a pair of third-place performances on the bars (9.2) and the floor (9.225).

Harkins came in first on the beam during the AAU Silver meet, notching a 9.75 and finishing tied for third with a 37.55 all-around tally. Additionally, Harkins placed third



Shy'Ann Beasley

on the bars with a 9.525.

The AAU Silver bars title went to Lee with a 9.6. Her 36.875 all-around score was good enough for a third-place overall performance. She just missed another gold medal with a second-place finish on the beam, scoring a 9.3.

Last but not least, Leopold pulled in a 9.725 on the beam to claim an AAU Gold championship. Overall, she



Kylee Coggins

placed fourth with a 37.4 by way of two fourths and one fifth-place finish in the other events.

In other state competition, Madelyn Early turned in a runner-up performance in AAU Silver action. Her 37.85 all-around score resulted in a second-place finish thanks to four top-four scores.

Her 9.65 was good enough for second on the bars



Addison Harkins

while a 9.475 gave her third in the floor exercises.

Keely Shook placed second on the floor (9.35) to take fourth overall in the AAU Silver meet. Lucie Burgess (36.775) and Selah Patterson (36.55) also came in fourth in their respective AAU Bronze age groups.

Burgess came in second on the vault and third on the beam. Patterson was second



Addyson Lee

on the vault and fourth on the floor.

Rounding out the AAU Bronze competition, Baylor Sullivan (8th) and Brooke Mowry (10th) turned in a pair of top-10 overall performances.

Shaylynn Davis placed sixth overall (35.85) in AAU Gold thanks to a pair of top fives on the bars and beam. Abby Brown also came in



Navaeh Leopold

fourth (36.275) in AAU Gold, highlighted by a third-place score (9.375) on the bars.

Emma Schuette placed eighth during the USA Gold Level 6 meet. In other USA Gold action, Lola Patton turned in a fourth-place performance (9.35) on the beam. Josie Poston's 9.125 was good enough for eighth on the beam while Avery Frechette placed 11th on the bars with an 8.825.

Basketball: Garrett seeks blend of youth and experience to inspire turnaround

'Defense, defense, defense' the focal point as Union attends upcoming North Forsyth camp

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The Union County men's basketball team and head coach Corey Garrett are determined to prove that 2021 was merely a speed bump and not the standard for the Panthers basketball program.

And while Union County suffered a bit of misfortune early in the week at Fannin County, they rebounded by winning three of four at the Towns County camp on Thursday despite missing three key seniors. After suffering losses to Cornerstone Prep, White County and Gilmer on Monday at Fannin, the Panthers split a pair of Tuesday contests, taking care of Gilmer in the rematch and narrowly falling to the host Rebels.

"We probably could have won [the Cornerstone Prep] game, but I was just trying to play everybody," Garrett said. "We probably would've won if we had played for the win but we ended up losing it by three. We came back on Tuesday and beat Gilmer by 10 and lost by three to Fannin. That was another one where we could've won if we had went for it, but we still played pretty well."

On the heels of a 1-4 showing in Blue Ridge, the Panthers bounced back Thursday by knocking off White County, Pincrest Academy and Robbinsville, North Carolina before dropping the finale to Kings Ridge.

Union County opened the Towns camp by easily taking care of business vs. White County, who sat its starters for the entire contest.

"I'm not sure what was up with that," said Garrett regarding White County gifting his squad an easy victory. "[The White County coach] had several of his varsity guys sitting off to the side. Maybe he was just trying to play his younger guys."

In the second contest, the Panthers jumped all over Robbinsville, scoring the first seven points, before the Black Knights built a double-digit lead against the Union junior varsity. Trailing by nine points late in the game, Garrett turned to the starters and they quickly turned a nine-point deficit into a five-point victory. When the dust settled, the senior All-Region duo of Caleb John and Landon Kight finished with a +21 point differential while on



Rising senior forward Landon Kight glides to the hoop during Union's come-from-behind camp win over Robbinsville, NC. Photo/Todd Forrest



Rising freshman guard Houston Henry puts it on the floor and drives to the basket during Union County's win over White County at last Thursday's Towns County camp. Photo/Todd Forrest



An animated Coach Garrett (left) encourages Houston Henry (15), Jude Ellis (13) and Hayden Payne (25) to corral the loose ball following a White County miscue. Photo/Todd Forrest

the floor.

Union County rallied to knock off Pincrest in game three, taking a two-point victory after trailing by as many as 11 points. The Panthers eventually dropped a contest in the finale, losing by a half-dozen to Kings Ridge in the camp's fourth and final outing.

"We haven't been able to [focus on defense] at all this summer, but we were able to put some things in [during practice] on Wednesday that we were able

to use Thursday at Towns, so that was a huge bright spot," said Garrett, revealing a few positive takeaways from last week.

During Thursday's action, Union County received significant contributions from a pair of rising freshmen, Jude Ellis and Houston Henry. For the most part, the Panthers were carried by the usual suspects: John, Kight, Hayden Payne, Austin Taylor, Eli Underwood and a few other returners, but Ellis, Henry and a host of underclassmen deliv-

ered time after time in clutch situations.

"We were very excited to see that," Garrett said regarding the Panthers' youth. "Those guys didn't play with the varsity at Fannin and we went 1-4. Then, at Towns, we went 4-1 with [Ellis and Henry] starting. Hayden Hughes and Dusty Aaron also played a lot of minutes and they are all freshmen."

Union County wraps up summer camps this week with a two-day stop at North Forsyth.

With the Georgia High School Association's mandated dead week closing out the month of June, North Forsyth offers Garrett one final glimpse at his squad against outside competition.

"The offense is getting better and we're moving the ball better than we ever have, of course it helps when you're hitting shots, so we want to continue working on our ball movement and improving on defense, mainly our off-ball defense," Garrett said. "The [off-

ball defense] was something we talked about on Wednesday and it did look good on Thursday. So for now, it's just defense, defense, defense and trying to get better."

The Panthers will lift weights and practice on Monday and Thursday during July, Garrett added. The offseason schedule will see an uptick when school gets underway in August as the Panthers begin prepping for October and the official start of practice.

Solid turnout at last week's Lady Panthers youth basketball camp

Union County and Robbinsville, NC square off; two additional scrimmages this week

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The Union County Lady Panthers welcomed 30-plus youngsters during last week's two-day girls' youth basketball camp before playing host to Robbinsville, North Carolina in a Wednesday-morning scrimmage contest.

The Monday-Tuesday youth camp featured UCHS basketball players playing the role of instructor for future Lady Panther hoopers in grades 1-8.

"It went great and the players did a great job interacting with all the kids," said interim girls basketball coach Mandy Hunter. "We put [the campers] through different stations, just having them work on the fundamentals. We also gave them some different things, some different drills that they could work on at home, with or without a basketball goal."

Following the youth camp, Robbinsville, NC paid a visit to UCHS for a controlled scrimmage contest, allowing both coaches to provide in-game instruction and address situational concerns in a regulated environment. Coach Hunter admits that while she's



The Lady Panthers and nearly three dozen youngsters used last week's two-day camp to focus on fundamentals. Photo/submitted

thrilled with the opportunity to face live competition over the summer, she didn't believe that her squad was giving it the old college try on this particular occasion.

"I feel like our effort was not where it should've been and not on the same level as the previous week at [the University of] North Georgia camp," she said. "But at least we were able

to play and get better, so we definitely learned from it."

The Lady Panthers featured four of the five starting underclassmen from 2020-21 vs. Robbinsville, along with a handful of 9th and 10th-grade contributors off the bench. As expected, rising seniors Rebekah Chambers and Ava Hunter did most of Union County's damage in the paint.

The Union County backcourt, however, could be just as vital to the team's success this coming winter.

Rising seniors Aubrie Banton, Ansley Collins and Caley Davis, rising junior Corinne Hill, along with rising sophomores Katie Byers, Sophia McNabb, Kamryn Mull, Lara Turner and a few rising freshmen are all preparing to

take on a heavier work load. Steady perimeter play would provide the Lady Panthers with some much-needed offensive balance in 2022 while forcing the opposition out of the paint-packing defenses that slowed Union County for much of 2021.

"I see improvement [in the backcourt this summer], they're working hard and have

spent the offseason trying to get better," Mandy Hunter said. "We're hoping they're able to alleviate some of the pressure off of our frontcourt."

The summer camp season wraps up this week with scrimmages vs. Hayesville, NC and Gilmer. The Lady Panthers host Hayesville in a varsity-only contest on Wednesday at 10 a.m. before traveling to Ellijay on Thursday for another 10 a.m. scrimmage (varsity and JV).

"Anytime that we can get in the gym and get better, that's great experience for us," Mandy Hunter said. "Things will really begin to wind down for us after these two scrimmages. Next week we have the dead week, then softball, cross country and the other fall sports all ramp up in July."

Coach Hunter noted that her squad will resume workouts in August ahead of the official start of practice in October.

"We're just trying to prepare all of our student athletes and build them up for when they go out into the world," said Coach Hunter, putting her athletic director hat on for a moment. "We hope that we're able to teach them all life lessons on a day-to-day basis so they can become strong adults."



Rising sophomore guard Sophia McNabb goes to work in the post vs. Robbinsville, NC. Photo/Todd Forrest



Coach Hunter and the Lady Panthers during a break in the action vs. Robbinsville, NC at UCHS last Wednesday, June 16. Photo/Todd Forrest



Rising sophomore Katie Byers sends up a floater in the lane during last week's scrimmage contest with Robbinsville, NC. Photo/Todd Forrest

10U Softball team places third at GRPA District 7 tourney



Union County's 10U softball team jumped out to a blazing start at last week's 10U District 7 Softball Tournament in Jackson County before finishing in third place over the weekend. The Lady Panthers thumped Dawson County 11-3 in Thursday's opener, but fell 21-6 to eventual champion Jefferson in round two on Friday. In Saturday morning's rematch with Dawson County, the Lady Tigers came out on top 16-5 to earn a trip to the 10U title game - which Jefferson won 14-2. The Lady Panthers are coached by Justin Gwynn, Jason Seabolt, Joy Patton and Brittany Gwynn. The team members are Hayden Abercrombie, Marlee Cisneros, Arlee Davis, Bristol Davis, Molly Giddens, Aliyah Gwynn, Chelsee Hutson, Mya Jordan, Kinsley Kendrick, Taylor Patton, Ava Stover and Faith Walker.



Rising sophomore Lara Turner fires a pass into the post during last week's scrimmage vs. Robbinsville, NC. Photo/Todd Forrest

New scoreboards spring up for Union County baseball, softball



Union County baseball and softball teams will have new scoreboards during the 2021-22 school year. The new UCHS baseball scoreboard (pictured, right) located side-by-side with the old scoreboard (left), was put up last month at the conclusion of the school year. According to Union County athletic director Mandy Hunter, the school used Coke allotments split evenly between the two scoreboards. The remainder of the costs were covered by the UCHS baseball and softball diamond clubs. Photo/Todd Forrest