

Sports

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UCRD: Union County 12U baseball second at State

By Todd Forrest
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Thomasville - The Union County Recreation Department's 12U baseball team made the six-hour trek to southwest Georgia last week and left with the State runner-up trophy.

The Panthers entered the State tourney off a dominant district performance that saw Union outscore the opposition by a combined total of 71-14 over four games, en route to the District 7 title.

Picking up where they left off, the Panthers handled host Thomasville by an 8-2 score in their first State contest on Wednesday, June 22. The following day, Union suffered its first loss of the postseason, falling 11-5 to the eventual champion, Grady County out of District 3.

The Panthers bounced back with a 9-5 victory over Thomasville in the loser's bracket to earn another crack at Grady County, who edged Union County 3-0 in the title game.

Grady County's path to the championship included a 19-0 victory over District 7 runner-up Jefferson in the opening round. Ahead of its first win over Union County, Grady knocked off District 5 champion Fannin County, 14-5 in round two.

Thomasville finished third, District 2 champ Glynn County was fourth and Fannin County finished in a fifth-place tie with District 3 runner-up Worth County.

The Union County 12U team was coached by Adam Walker, Ivan Walker and Tim

Batchelor. Pitching coaches were Tim Davis and Levi Kendrick.

The roster includes No. 1 David Mollohan, No. 3 Mikey Davis, No. 4 Hudson Collins, No. 5 Grayson Mayfield, No. 11 Jacob Nichols, No. 13 Kamden Kendrick, No. 20 Nolan Davis, No. 21 Jackson Nichols, No. 21 Sawyer Gaylord, No. 22 Corbin Combs, No. 25 Bear Silver, No. 26 Preston Banton, No. 32 Konner Dockery and No. 44 Anthony Mederas.

On the mound, Nolan Davis led the pitching staff with 5 innings of work at State. Kamden Kendrick tossed 4 2/3 innings, while Mederas and Jackson Nichols saw 4 innings apiece.

Mikey Davis went 1 2/3 innings and Mayfield worked 2/3 of an inning.

Jackson Nichols didn't allow a run while limiting the opposition to a .214 average over four frames. Nolan Davis' six strikeouts were a team high to go with a 3.60 ERA.

Mikey Davis also compiled a 3.60 ERA while Kendrick fanned four batters and Mederas struck out three. Kendrick and Mederas also picked up one decision each in Union County's two wins. Jackson Nichols recorded one save.

Union County 14U Baseball: In other state action, the Panthers' 14U team traveled to Jeff Davis County and dropped a 3-2 heartbreaker to District 1 runner-up Hawkinsville in the opener on Tuesday, June 21.

The following day, Union County was eliminated via a 9-3 loss to District 2 champion Long County.



The Union County 12U baseball team last week after placing second at state in Thomasville. Photo/UCRD

#	Name	G	PA	AB	R	H	B	1B	2B	3B	HR	RBI	AVG	BB	Kc	Ks	SO	HBP	SB	CS	SCB	SF	SAC	ROE	FC
5	Grayson Mayfield	4	13	13	4	7	0	5	1	1	0	2	0.538	0	1	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0
23	Corbin Combs	4	10	10	2	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.400	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
20	Nolan Davis	4	11	9	1	3	0	1	1	0	1	6	0.333	2	3	1	4	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	1
21	Jackson Nichols	4	12	9	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	3	0.222	2	2	3	5	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
4	Hudson Collins	4	10	9	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0.222	1	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Mikey Davis	4	8	6	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0.167	2	0	2	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0
32	Konner Dockery	4	14	7	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.143	6	0	3	3	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	0
13	Kamden Kendrick	4	12	9	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.111	3	2	3	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1
11	Jacob Nichols	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
25	Bear Silver	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
44	Anthony Mederas	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26	Preston Banton	3	6	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	1	1	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
22	Sawyer Gaylord	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS		4	102	83	22	21	0	17	2	1	1	14	0.253	17	13	18	31	0	21	0	0	2	2	6	2

Union County 12U State Tournament hitting statistics. Stats courtesy of coaches Adam and Ivan Walker.

Getting to know incoming UCHS softball coach Carissa Owenby

By Todd Forrest
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During the spring, Union County High School selected assistant coach Carissa Owenby as the fast-pitch softball program's third head coach, following the departure of former skipper Stephen Mitchell.

A Hayesville, North Carolina graduate, Owenby takes over the Lady Panthers' job with head coaching experience after leading the Hiwassee Dam, North Carolina program ahead of her arrival in Blairsville.

Owenby played her college ball at UNC-Pembroke before graduating from Western Carolina in 2013. Upon earning her degree, she began teaching at Martins Creek while coaching at Hiwassee Dam, where she spent five years before taking over the Union County middle school program for two seasons.

During the 2021 season, Owenby jumped to the high school team, where she worked under Coach Mitchell during the Lady Panthers' Elite Eight run.

Since its inception in 2005, Union County's fast-pitch softball program has remained one of the school's most consistent postseason contenders, qualifying for the State playoffs in 13 of the last 14 years, winning two region titles and finishing as the Class AA runner-up in 2010.

The *North Georgia News* caught up with the new coach earlier this month after Owenby and her husband,



Carissa and Kody Owenby with Sadie, their oldest child.

Kody, welcomed their second daughter, Nora, in May.

NGN: What attracted you to the Union County job in the beginning? You were the head coach at Hiwassee Dam, but then you left a couple of years ago to become the middle school coach at Union.

CO: My husband (UCHS 2007 grad Kody Owenby) got a job at Union County, and I knew we wanted to have kids eventually, so I wanted to be in the same area. I told him I would apply and see what happens because I was the head coach at Hiwassee Dam, and it

was kind of hard to leave. But [Union] told me I could coach middle school, and I thought, okay, that sounds good. I was really excited.

NGN: Now that you're a high school head coach again, what do you want to establish on day one and during year one?

CO: I want to mold good kids that we will be proud to send out into the community one day. We hope to build kids that can become solid members of the community.

NGN: I know you've got a lot going on off the field, but



Owenby will lean upon returning ace Sierra Burnette this fall. Over two seasons in the circle, the rising-junior has compiled a 12-9 record with a 2.91 ERA, a 1.33 WHIP and 87 strikeouts. Photo/Todd Forrest

how are you balancing a new daughter while taking over a new program, especially during these summer months?

CO: We don't have a lot going on right now, but we're going to hold some camps at the end of June. We're most likely going to have some games in July, but the last time I checked, the schedule still was not finished. We should know more about the games by July 1. The games we do have scheduled are during the weeks of [July] 11th and [July] 18th.

NGN: It helps that you got to know these girls as an

assistant coach, and I'm sure Coach Mitchell was also a big help during the transition.

CO: He's been fantastic. He's been very helpful in getting me all set up. And yeah, the transition has been pretty smooth because I've coached most of these girls already in middle school, with the exception of the upcoming freshmen.

NGN: You've already had tryouts, correct? How was the turnout among the returning players and those incoming freshmen?

CO: We had tryouts al-

ready and I think we're going to be pretty good. We're going to be a little young, but overall, I believe we will be very competitive.

NGN: Have you finalized your coaching staff?

CO: Yes. Haley Blaylock is coming up to help the high school team this year. But I'm very grateful for my assistant coaches. Kaitlyn Seabolt, Robby Roxbury and Haley Blaylock have been awesome and I'm excited to have their help. I actually coached Haley at Hiwassee Dam, so I'm happy to have her.

Melissa Collins, Vicki Davis and Joy Patton have also been a big help, especially with the Diamond Club. I didn't know anything about the Diamond Club, but they've been amazing.

NGN: Is a coaching career something you've always wanted to pursue?

CO: When my playing days ended, I was like, what now? I love softball and didn't want it to end, but I knew that coaching was a way that I could keep it a part of my life. Hopefully, I can help these girls love it the way I do.

Learn to Play Pickleball

Free Beginners Classes every Tuesday at 6 p.m. (weather permitting).

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Courts are located on Chase Drive behind the Health Department. For more information contact: blairsvillepickleball@yahoo.com

Mountain Gymnastics Center athletes amass five championships at State meet

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Lawrenceville - Representing Blairsville's Mountain Gymnastics Center (MGC), Shy'Ann Beasley, Lucie Burgess, Addyson Lee, Keely Shook and Baylor Sullivan were each crowned a State Champion in their respective divisions during the AAU and USA State meets in the spring.

Beasley took home first on the bars in the AAU Xcel Gold Experienced Division with a score of 9.450.

Burgess' score of 8.9 on the beam gave her a first-place finish in the AAU Xcel Silver Novice Division. Lee recorded a 9.2 on the beam to place atop the AAU Xcel Gold Novice Division.

Shook came in first on the beam in the AAU Xcel Gold Experienced Division, tallying a 9.5. And last but not least, Sullivan's 9.1 on the floor exercises earned a gold medal atop the AAU Level 1 Novice Division.

Along with a second-place performance on the vault, Burgess just missed an all-around State title, placing second with a 36.125.

Scoring a 36.075, Madelyn Primeaux placed third all-around in AAU Xcel Silver with a runner-up performance on beam and a bronze medal

score on the vault. In other AAU Xcel Silver competition, Hartley Hodges placed ninth and Selah Patterson was 11th in the Novice Division.

In the Experienced Division, Kyle Coggins and Makenzie Duval finished ninth. Reagan Gwynn placed 11th.

Sullivan placed fifth all-around with a 35.225 in AAU Level 1 (Novice), while Hope Wright and Ellenore Perrone each came in ninth. Mattie Kate Alexander also competed for MGC in Level 1 Novice.

In AAU Level 1 (Experienced), Renley Loyd and Raelynn Thomas both placed seventh. Camilla Duello was 11th.

Lee placed third all-

around in AAU Gold Novice, totaling a 35.875. Shook was second all-around with a 37.275 in AAU Gold Experienced, thanks to a second on the vault to go with her gold medal on the beam.

Shaylyne Davis came in third all-around with a score of 36.925, via a second on the bars and third on the beam.

Beasley ended up seventh all-around in AAU Gold Experienced and Addison Harkins placed 11th.

In Level 7 competition, Emma Schuette turned in a top-10 showing on the bars with a 9.25.

The *North Georgia News* would like to congratulate all of MGC's incredible athletes on a job well done.



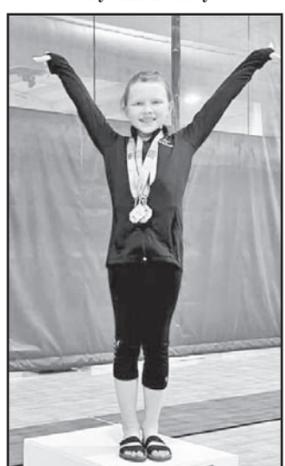
Shy'Ann Beasley



Lucie Burgess



Addyson Lee



Keely Shook



Baylor Sullivan

Men's Basketball: Panthers show signs of improvement at UNG, North Forsyth camps

By Todd Forrest
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The Union County men completed the final week of summer games with six wins in 11 meetings between the University of North Georgia (UNG) and North Forsyth camps.

Currently, Union County is hosting its youth camp through Wednesday before the Georgia High School Association's mandatory July 4 dead week. Upon their return next month, the Panthers will spend the remainder of the summer in the weight room and hosting open-gym pick-up games.

Union County's final week of competition opened at UNG on Monday, June 20, where they won six of nine games over three days. The junior varsity team also participated in six games during two days in Dahlonega.

The Panthers faced seven opponents from higher classifications at UNG, in addition to their victories over Class A's Landmark Christian and Class AA's Gordon Central. Against the larger schools, Union County's signature win came over Loganville, who went 18-11 last year and reached the Class 5A Elite Eight.

In other games at UNG, the Panthers defeated Class AAA private school Westminster (twice) and 6A Riverwood,

while falling to Creekview (6A), Midtown (5A, formerly Grady High) and River Ridge, who reached the Elite 8 while going 24-6 in 6A.

"We had [River Ridge] beat but they came back on us at the end," Union County head coach Corey Garrett said. "Of our five losses last week, four were by six points or less. The [only exception] was Creekview, who beat us by 17, and that was the worst game we had."

Union County met a pair of Class 7A programs at North Forsyth on Thursday, June 23, dropping two tightly-contested matchups vs. South Forsyth and Forsyth Central, despite missing one starter.

"Had [everyone] been there, I think we would have won both of those games," Garrett said. "We lost to South Forsyth by one and Forsyth Central by four."

Playing shorthanded at North Forsyth, Garrett used a seven-man rotation that consisted of five sophomores, a junior and a senior. On top of the one missing regular, the Panthers are still without a handful of football players, but that hasn't impacted the scoring, according to Garrett.

"Offensively, our scoring was super-evenly spread out and very consistent the whole week," he said. "One of the things that made me happy

was our execution, especially coming out of huddles. We were able to draw stuff up in the huddle and go out and execute, pretty much every chance we had."

The one weak spot this summer has been the defense, however, Garrett noticed some positive signs on that side of the ball during the final week.

"The defense definitely looked better," he said. "But like I said, we only played seven players, so when we were fresh, we were really good and we were taking charges. We still need to work on box-outs and our transition defense, but those are things we can work on going into the season."

As for the rotation, Garrett hopes to add depth after football season when he has a full roster at his disposal, but in the meantime, he will spend the rest of the summer months getting his team into the best physical shape possible.

"I'd like to add to the rotation, and I think we can, but we just need to get in shape," he said. "When you have a seven-man rotation, you're an injury from only having six. So going into the fall, we're going to be doing a lot of running to try and prepare for the season."

The Panthers are hosting their annual youth camp this week. As of last weekend, 52 youngsters have pre-registered for the three-day event.



Union County head coach Corey Garrett with his Panthers during their recent joint-practice session with Hayesville, North Carolina. Photo/Todd Forrest

Girls basketball, football summer camp updates



The Union County Lady Panthers basketball team and new head coach Brad Cochran hosted a youth camp last week (pictured), then split a pair of summer games at Walnut Grove on Thursday. Additional coverage, a coach interview and extra photos from the youth camp and last week's summer games will be available in next week's *North Georgia News*. The football team, meanwhile, visited White County last Thursday for a shared practice and 7-on-7 action. The Panthers will now take some time off ahead of the GHSA dead week. Coverage, interviews and photos from the trip to Cleveland will also be in next week's newspaper. Photo/Todd Forrest

NASCAR 2022

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Elliott Wins At Nashville

LEBANON, Tenn.--Chase Elliott held off Kurt Busch on a late race restart to win Sunday's Cup Series race, his second of the season.

After a late caution, Elliott remained on the track and led the field to a restart with four laps remaining.

He pulled away from Kurt Busch and crossed the finish line by a margin of 0.551 seconds.

"Yeah, I think the biggest thing was we just struggled here last year, so to have a struggle race here a year ago and then to be able to come back and be as competitive as we were in the second half of the race, I am the most proud of that piece of the puzzle," said Elliott.

"I don't think there's anything special I did. You can take a car that isn't balanced as well as what ours was tonight and have the right lane choice and the right guys get bottled up at the right time, and you pass three or four of them."

"So I don't necessarily think there was the turning point for me. I feel like it was more just a balance thing and feeling like we had got it really close. From there we just tried to execute and have good restarts up front and have good pit stops."

Elliott led twice for 42 laps, including the final 39 after taking the lead from Kyle Busch.

Kurt Busch's only regret about his runner-up finish was not being more aggressive on the final restart.

"I wanted to throw some fenders, but I didn't get the job done," Busch said. "Everybody will be smiling, but I let them down. I should have come up with a better plan."

The remaining top 10 drivers were Ryan Blaney, Kyle Larson, Ross Chastain, Denny Hamlin, Austin Cindric, Christopher Bell, Joey Logano, and Kevin Harvick.

Joe Gibbs Racing cars combined to lead 251 laps, but none finished in the top five following a late-race pit stop under caution for tires. Denny Hamlin, who led a race-high 115 laps, finished 6th.

There were two red flag periods due to rain and lightning. The first one came during lap 41, while the second was on lap 140 and lasted over two hours. The race took nearly eight hours to complete because of the two weather delays.

Top 10 leaders after 17 of 36: 1. Elliott-586, 2. Chastain-556, 3. Blaney-555, 4. Kyle Busch-539, 5. Logano-534, 6. Larson-519, 7. Truex Jr.-516, 8. Bell-480, 9. Byron-468, 10. Bowman-461.

ALLGAIER BREEZES TO XFINITY WIN

Justin Allgaier led five times for 134 laps and swept the first two stages of Saturday's Xfinity Series race by 4.513 seconds ahead of Trevor Bayne. The win was his second of the season and the 18th of his career.

"I don't think I've ever had a better race car," he said. "What a heck of a race, man. We've been coming here for a long time, and I love this race track. Been trying to get a win so bad and hadn't been able to do it."

"Today was like a dirt race. It was slick, it was hot, we were sliding around... I've got a guitar to take home, and we're going to enjoy it, for sure."

Riley Herbst, Ty Gibbs, Sam Mayer, Ryan Preece, Jeffrey Earnhardt, Austin Hill, Ryan Sieg, and Brett Moffitt were the remaining top 10 finishers.

Top 10 leaders after 15 of 33: 1. Allmendinger-601, 2. Gibbs-576, 3. Allgaier-569, 4. Gragson-559, 5. Berry-526, 6. Mayer-466, 7. Jones-457, 8. Hill-452, 9. Herbst-413, 10. Hemric-409.

PREECE WINS TRUCK RACE AT NASHVILLE

Here are the results of the NASCAR Truck Series race held Friday, June 24 at Nashville Speedway. 1. Ryan Preece, 2. Zane Smith, 3. Carson Hocevar, 4. Ty Majeski, 5. Stewart Friesen, 6. Christian Eckes, 7. Tyler Ankrum, 8. Max Gutenez, 9. John Nemechek, 10. Matt Crafton.

Top 10 leaders after 14 of 23: 1. Z. Smith-530, 2. Nemechek-509, 3. Rhodes-500, 4. C. Smith-495, 5. Friesen-477, 6. Majeski-477, 7. Eckes-447, 8. Hocevar-425, 9. Engfinger-389,



Elliott Wins At Nashville

10. Crafton-379.

LEGENDARY BRUTON SMITH PASSES AWAY

Meanwhile, Bruton Smith, a leading figure in automobile racing passed away last week.

Born March 2, 1927, Smith was the youngest of nine children and grew up on a modest farm in Oakboro, North Carolina. Smith learned the value of hard work early in life. With an inspiring determination and relentless optimism, Smith built a business empire through the automotive



Bruton Smith

and motorsports industries and left a legacy to inspire generations of his family, friends and colleagues.

"My parents taught us what work was all about," Smith said in 2008. "As I look back, that was a gift, even though I certainly didn't think so at the time. A lot of people don't have that gift because they didn't grow up working. But if you are on a family farm, that's what you do. Everything is hard work."

Smith founded Speedway Motorsports by consolidating his motorsports holdings in December 1994, and in February 1995, he made it the first motorsports company to trade on the New York Stock Exchange. Today the company owns and operates 11 tracks.

Smith's first job outside the family farm came at age 12 when he went to work at a local saw mill. Two days after graduating from Oakboro High School, Smith took a job in a hosiery mill, before he eventually made a purchase that would lead him to two successful business careers.

"I bought a race car for \$700. The whole idea at that time was that I was going to be a race car driver," Smith once explained. "I learned to drive, but that career didn't last long." Smith's mother had other ideas and prayed to a higher authority. "She started fighting dirty," laughed Smith in a 2005 interview with Motorsport.com. "You can't fight your mom and God, so I stopped driving."

Smith sold his first car, a 1939 Buick sedan, for a small profit and continued to sell cars from his mother's front yard. The young entrepreneur also promot-

ed his first race before he was 18 years old.

"There was a whole lot of unrest with the drivers and car owners at that time," Smith continued. "We had a meeting and I was unlucky enough to be appointed a committee of one to promote a race. I had never done that, but I promoted a race in Midland, North Carolina, and I made a little bit of money, so I thought I'd try it again."

In his early 20s, Smith's career as promoter and car salesman took a turn when he was drafted by the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Smith served two years stateside as a paratrooper, then returned to selling cars and promoting auto races featuring the new NASCAR organization. Through a rough era for the sport, Smith was one of the first professional promoters to pay good purses, tend to the needs of the fans and find unique ways to promote events at speedways he leased around North Carolina.

In 1959, he partnered with NASCAR driver Curtis Turner and built his first permanent motorsports facility, Charlotte Motor Speedway. The track opened in June 1960 with a 600-mile race, the longest ever in NASCAR's history.

"I love the racing business. I want to contribute more and more," Smith said in 2015. "You hear us preach about 'fan friendly.' I think that is a driver for me to just do more things. I enjoy the contributions I've been able to make to the sport."

Racing Joke: Kurt had left the race car shop early on a Tuesday afternoon after a difficult day. Realizing his wife wouldn't be home, he decided to stop off at a local restaurant for lunch. The waitress came over to take his order. Feeling a little out of sorts, Kurt replied, "Meat loaf and a kind word."

When the waitress returned with the meat loaf, Kurt asked, "Where's the kind word?"

The waitress bent down and whispered, "Don't eat the meat loaf."

Weekend Racing: Both the Cup and Xfinity Series will be at Road America road course in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. The Truck Series does not race again until July 9.

Sat., July 2: Xfinity Series race 16 of 33; Starting time: 2:30 pm ET; TV: USA.

Sun., July 3: Cup series race 18 of 36; Starting time: 3:00 pm ET; TV: USA.

Racing Trivia Question: Where was the first official NASCAR race held?

Last Week's Question: Where is Kurt Busch's hometown? Answer: Las Vegas, Nev.

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Allegheny Masonic "Toss In The Mountains" Cornhole Tournament



Allegheny Masonic Lodge No. 114 is proud to sponsor the 1st Annual "Toss In The Mountains" on Saturday, August 13th; 11AM - 7 PM at the Pat Haralson Civic Center, Blairsville, GA 30512.

The cost is \$40; bring your own team; \$20 person -

Blind Draw.

1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes plus many more prize opportunities; 50/50 Raffle; Food on hand for additional cost; Activities for the whole family; Pre-register by contacting: Corey Harkins @ kharkins0821@gmail.com or Ivy Smith @ allegheny114@outlook.com.

Presented by North Georgia Cornhole Association.