

Sports

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Perry's Panthers finding playmakers on both sides of the football

By Todd Forrest
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Hiawassee - Union County football saw its first 7-on-7 action of the summer at Towns County High School on Thursday, June 24, as one of five participating teams in the annual Fellowship of Christian Athletes' offensive lineman and 7-on-7 camp.

Under the direction of first-year head coach Michael Perry and new defensive coordinator Thomas Nelson, the Panthers clicked from the first possession, taking all three contests by a combined tally of 102-37. (All point-totals are unofficial since the camp did not keep score.)

"We did a great job catching the ball today, I think we only had two drops all day," Perry said at the conclusion of the camp. "I'm very proud of the offense, but I'm prouder of the defense because 7-on-7 is hard. It's not easy keeping teams out of the endzone and we forced a couple turnovers too, so I'm very proud of them."

Defensive line play got underway with an interception on the very first series when rising-senior cornerback Trace Wright ran under a Chestatee overthrow in the endzone to spark the Panthers to a commanding 19-0 advantage.

Earlier, with Union already out front 12-0, rising senior quarterback Logan Helcher fired a dime over the middle, connecting with the outstretched hands of wide receiver Caleb John on a deep post route in



Rising senior receiver Keyton Chitwood elevates to make a one-handed grab in the back of the endzone vs. Towns County. Photo/Todd Forrest

the endzone. John, who earned All-Region honors on the hardwood last winter, is in his first season on the gridiron, where he expects to play a significant role in the Union County passing attack, as well as in the defensive backfield.

In the second contest, the Panthers scored the first 30 points of a 30-7 win over Gilmer

before rattling off 28-straight to blow open a 7-7 tie vs. Towns County, en route to a 35-14 victory.

Taking on the host in the third and final matchup, rising-senior receiver Keyton Chitwood hauled in a leaping one-handed grab in the back of the endzone, igniting an outburst allowing Union to race out to a



Alongside fellow senior defensive back Trace Wright, cornerback Eli Peugh (right) picks off a Gilmer pass in game two. Photo/Todd Forrest



Tyler Grasty hauls in a Caiden Tanner touchdown pass with one hand vs. Towns County. Photo/Todd Forrest

35-7 advantage.

The Panthers' final interception of the morning helped put Towns County away for good, setting up one last touchdown in the waning moments.

Rising sophomores Tyler Grasty and Caiden Tanner put an exclamation point on the day when Grasty hauled in a one-handed, over-the-shoulder

touchdown catch from Tanner, opening up a 28-point margin over the rival Indians.

Defensively, Union County picked off three passes in the three games - two by Wright and another courtesy of rising senior cornerback Eli Peugh.

"They all played well [defensively]," Nelson said. "We have a lot of work to do before

the season starts, [but] they are improving as an overall group. Trace Wright, Griff Young, Wilson Walker and rising freshman Jensen Goble are doing well at safety (Walker and Goble each turned in a stellar offensive performance with a pair of touchdown catches).

"Eli Peugh, Caleb John, and Sam Page are doing well at corner. The linebackers did a really good job as well. We had [three interceptions] and two or three other balls that were deflected. Overall it was a good day."

When the 7-on-7 wrapped up, the offensive lineman participated in a skills competition that included a timed obstacle course that tested strength, speed and stamina. The host Indians came out on top by approximately 30 seconds over second-place Chestatee and third-place Union County.

This week marks the Georgia High School Association's annual July 4 dead week, but the Panthers return to the field on Monday, July 5 to begin the final month of preparation before official practice begins in August.

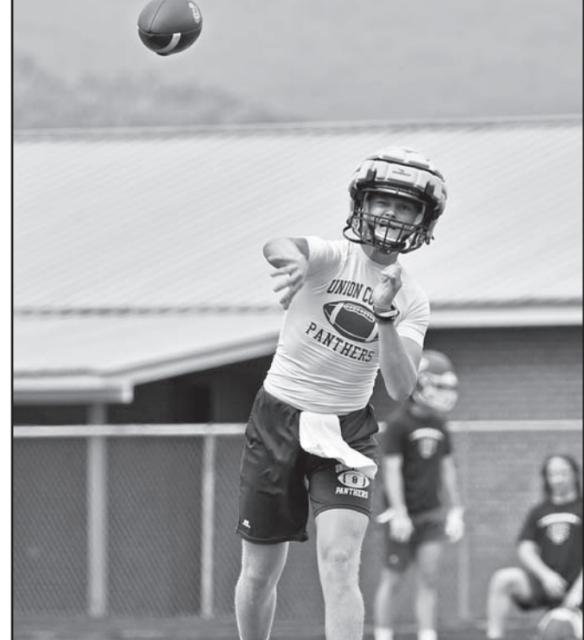
"[In July] we're going to get back to work in the weight room and on the field," Perry said. "We also have a few more 7-on-7 tournaments coming up, and we're just trying to get ready for the season. The playbook is similar to what they've done in the past, but we still have a few things we need to clean up. With the start of practice a month away, we're going to pick up the intensity and start taking things a bit more seriously next month."



Not going to catch him: Rising freshman speedster Jensen Goble takes a short throw to the house from 30+ yards out. Photo/Todd Forrest



Point guard Caleb John gets acclimated to the gridiron with his first 7-on-7 touchdown - coming vs. Chestatee in game one. Photo/Todd Forrest



Logan Helcher played three games of turnover-free football during last week's FCA 7-on-7 camp at TCHS. Photo/Todd Forrest



All five participating teams filled the stands at TCHS' Frank McClure Stadium last Thursday for a morning devotion to open the camp courtesy of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Photo/Todd Forrest



With their teammates' encouragement, Union County's front-five competes in the piggy-back segment of the offensive lineman skills competition. Union placed third behind first-place Towns and runner-up Chestatee. The Panthers finished ahead of Gilmer and Oglethorpe County. Photo/Todd Forrest

UCRD 12U baseball team places second at GRPA State Tournament

By Todd Forrest
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Tifton - The Union County 12-and-under (12U) baseball team's summer of dominance fell one game short of a GRPA State title in south Georgia.

After emerging from the loser's bracket with a 17-6 victory over Jefferson - who Union defeated twice in District 7 tournament - the Panthers suffered a 4-1 final defeat to Grady.

Union County allowed one in the first and two in the second to stumble into a 3-0 hole. Trailing 4-0 after Grady tacked on another run in the fifth, Bentley Rich homered to lead off the sixth, but that was all the offense Union could muster in the final frame.

The tourney got underway with the Panthers forced to battle out of the play-in game, despite entering as one of the three district champions. After taking care of business with an 18-0 dismantling of Wilcox County, Union suffered a 13-7 loss to Grady.

The Panthers scored all seven runs over the final three innings but it proved too little, too late after spotting the eventual champs nine runs through the first three frames.

Rich and Kamden Kendrick accounted for two runs each in the loss.

Union took its frustrations out by posting a football score during a 26-3 rout of Worth County, setting up a rematch with Jefferson.

The Panthers sent 11 hitters to the plate during an eight-run third inning to seize a commanding 12-0 lead over the Dragons, allowing Union County to cruise to an 11-run victory.

Hudson Collins and Mikey Davis scored three runs apiece in the win. Karter Conley, Corbin Combs, Kendrick and Rich scored twice.

The 12U Panthers are coached by Trint Rich, Rusty Cox, Levi Kendrick and Kevin Conley. The players are Luke Bragg, Hudson Collins, Corbin Combs, Karter Conley, Chetley Cox, Mikey Davis, Jax Dillinger, Kamden Kendrick, Brandon Lynch, Grayson Mayfield, Jackson Nichols and Bentley Rich.

Areport on the 10U (third-place) and 14U teams will be included in next week's paper.



The Union County Recreation Department's 12U baseball team after clubbing the competition at the GRPA District 7 tournament in Madison County. Photo/Todd Forrest



L-R: The 12U Panthers (left) in the dugout prior to their district-clinching win over Jefferson. Corbin Combs (right) cracks a smile while taking a few practice cuts. Photos/Todd Forrest

Basketball: Union County men tested at recent North Forsyth camp

By Todd Forrest
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Coal Mountain - The Union County men wrapped up the month of June last week with one win in four contests at North Forsyth's two-day camp, scoring the week's lone victory over Class 7A Forsyth Central.

"We finished 1-3, but overall it was a good camp," Union County head coach Corey Garrett said. "We faced all Forsyth County schools, so we were definitely the smallest school there, but we competed with every team. The only game that wasn't all that close was against South Forsyth, and they won 20 games in Class 7A last year. They just out-manned us because they're so much deeper than we are."

The Panthers remained a bit shorthanded at North Forsyth due to other sports hosting camps the same day, but once again, the Union County freshmen picked up the slack and continued to impress the coaching staff.

"The only school [the



Austin Taylor splits two defenders at a summer camp. Photo/Todd Forrest



Caiden Tanner goes up strong during a summer game. Photo/Todd Forrest

freshmen] didn't play well against was against South Forsyth, and none of us played well that game," said Garrett when asked how his younger players handled the step up in competition. "South Forsyth had 12 or 15 guys that were just better than us, but we still competed

and worked hard. There is definitely a lot of positives to take away. I think we're going to look like a different team this year [because] we're deeper than we've been and we're a much better shooting team."

While the team has made tremendous strides in recent

weeks, Garrett believes there's still room to grow since he's rarely had a full roster at his disposal this summer.

"I definitely feel a lot better about the direction of the program and believe it's on the upswing," said Garrett when asked about the confidence

in the program compared to the end of last season. "We didn't have some of the football guys at North Forsyth. We haven't had Logan (Helcher) and Lake (Hughes) since before the Towns camp (June 17). But the young guys have really stepped up since the Fannin

County camp (June 15) and have helped us win games."

On the heels of three wins in four games at Towns County, the Panthers entered North Forsyth intending to fine-tune the defense without overloading the guys on too many Xs and Os.

"We didn't dive very deep [into the playbook at North Forsyth] and kept things pretty simple and still remained competitive, so we like where the program is going," he said. "I wouldn't say [the defense] was great, but we were worked on some things like our press and zone defenses and they were effective, so overall, it was definitely a promising camp. But like I said, this whole summer we've kept it very basic. When we get into the season, we'll start putting in different things. But for now, I'm trying to see how well we handle the basics, and I feel like we did a very good job."

Meanwhile, the Lady Panthers were unable to scrimmage last week after Hayesville, North Carolina and Gilmer both canceled their respective contests vs. Union County.

Local Racing Report: Tri-County

Tri-County held the Topless Outlaw Late Model Series with \$2,500 prize on June 18.

Street Stock: No. 12 Lynn Burchfield took home his first win of the season. Alex Vance No. 95 was second. No. 32 Logan Exum was third.

FWD: No. J3 Josh Dease took the win. No. 4 Shannon Jones was second. No. 1 Josh Smith came in third.

Crate: No. 9 Brian Kinserly took home the win. No. 12 Drew Deaver came in second. No. 96 Bobby Panther was third.

Modified Hobby: No. 81

John Howard took the checked flag for the win. No. 44 Bobby Elkins was second. No. 88 Ricky Smith was third.

Pony: No. Marty King took home first. Coming in second was No. 11PCayle Payne. No. 01 Phil Wood was third place.

Beginner 602: First place was Dylan Beavers. Second was No. 22 Tucker Anderson. No. 100 Copper Twiggs came in third.

Topless Outlaws: No. 5 Ronnie Johnson took home the win. No. 44 Chase King came in second. No. 3 Austin Neely came in third. By Blake Lynch

The Old Union Women's Golf Association 3rd annual Eclectic Tournament and upcoming events

The Old Union Women's Golf Association is in full swing for the 2021 season. On Monday, June 21, the women participated in the 3rd annual Eclectic Tournament. The Eclectic Tournament is a multi-round (two rounds of golf), the first week the player records their net score for each hole. The following week the player will try to beat their net score on each hole from the previous week. Their Eclectic score for each hole is their lowest net score for each hole. Payouts will be paid out in two places in four flights.

Twenty-nine players were on hand for the first round. The following players each had a birdie: Martha Zimmer, Karen Mussoline and Connie Dockery. The following players had a chip-in: Kathy James, Vicky Healy, Gloria White and Vicki Hought. A free round of golf, donated by Old Union, was given to Martha Zimmer for her 'closest to the pin' shot on the par 3, #13.

The Old Union Women's Golf Association continues to grow to 48 members. The recent, global Women's Golf Day which was celebrated at Old Union add-

ed Kathy James, Carol Millward, Becky London, Mary Tribble and Sally Thursby to the roster.

The next big event, 'Flag Day,' will be held on July 5. The competition format, where golfers begin the round with an allotment of strokes, continues until each player uses up her strokes. Each player receives an American flag with their name on it. The player places it in the ground at the point at which their final shot is played. The player who stakes her flag the farthest around the course is the winner. Pizza will be delivered as the women await the announcement of which player advanced their flag the furthest!

The Old Union Women's Golf Association welcomes all newcomers to the league with a handicap less than 40. If interested in joining or being a guest for no more than two rounds, contact Karen Mussoline, 352-638-3649/kmussoline@icloud.com or Cynthia Panter, 706-633-7587/cynthiapanter@yahoo.com or Cynthia Moorehead, 770-335-1000/cynthiaballasmoohead@gmail.com N(Jun30,Z6)CA

Benton MacKaye Trail Association hikes for July 7th thru July 26th

The following hikes are sponsored by the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. The current social distancing and health rules are used by hike Leaders.

July 7 (Wednesday) - The Benton MacKaye Trail Association sponsors a moderate to strenuous 7.5 mile hike on the Wildcat Creek Trail near Ellijay, GA. This includes stream crossing to Fall Branch Falls Trail to Ammons Falls and return. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information hikeleaderSD@bmtmail.org.

July 12 (Monday) - The Benton MacKaye Trail Association sponsors a moderate 5-6 mile hike on the Cartecay River Loop Trails. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Much of it hike is along the beautiful Cartecay River. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtmail.org.

July 14 (Wednesday) - The Benton MacKaye Trail Association sponsors a moderate 6.1 mile hike on the Laurel-Snow Trail to Laurel Falls in the Laurel Snow State Natural Area near Dayton, TN. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtmail.org.

July 17 (Saturday) - The Benton MacKaye Trail Association sponsors a moderately strenuous 6 mile hike on the Big Frog, Rough Creek, Benton MacKaye Trail loop of FS 221 in TN, with brief gravel road walk to complete the loop. Hike Leader George Owen. For more information contact hikeleaderGO@bmtmail.org.

July 26 (Monday) - The Benton MacKaye Trail Association sponsors a Four Season Hike Series - Summer: BMT - Hudson Gap, out and back. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 4-5 miles. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtmail.org.

Learn to play Pickleball

Free Beginners Classes every Thursday at 6 p.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 info contact: blairsvillepickleball@gmail.com.

Register for or sponsor Chatuge Regional Hospital Golf Tournament

On Thursday, September 16, 2021 Chatuge Regional Hospital will be hosting our 4th Annual Chatuge Regional Hospital Golf Tournament. The tournament will take place at Brasstown Valley Resort and Spa in Young Harris, Georgia.

Chatuge Regional Hospital is a 25-bed critical access hospital that offers cutting edge technology and personalized care to Towns County, and surrounding communities. All of the proceeds from this event will be used to support and assist programs and projects of Chatuge Regional Hospital to allow the continued

quality of care to our community. Whether you want to play in the tournament, or be a sponsor, we invite you to show your support and partner with us.

\$137.50 per player, \$550 per team. 8:30 AM Registration, 10 AM Shotgun Start.

Sponsorship Levels: Hole Sponsor: \$100, Team Sponsor: \$550, Silver Sponsor: \$1,000, Gold Sponsor: \$5,000.

All donations are tax deductible. For more info, to register a team or to become a sponsor, please contact Chelsey Phillips at (706) 896-7150 or chelseyp@uniongeneral.org.