

Sports

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Panthers 14U Baseball claims World Series Championship

By Todd Forrest
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Douglasville - A collection of baseball talent from Blairsville and Murphy, NC came out on top in the 14-and-under All-Star World Series earlier this month.

After dropping its first contest to Union City, the Panthers bounced back with two wins over Hapeville and a blowout revenge victory over Union City.

In the finals, the Panthers needed 10 innings to knock off Hapeville, 3-2 and take home the World Series title. Leading 1-0 after five, the Panthers allowed one run in the sixth. The score would remain knotted at 1-1 until the ninth when Hapeville pushed across a run in the top half of the inning. The Panthers answered in their half of the ninth to send the contest to the 10th.

On Panther pitcher Cole Laney replaced Will Duncan in the sixth and went 4.1 innings to record the win. After Laney worked a scoreless 10th, the Panthers scored the game-winner on a walk-off single by John Ledford, scoring Ty Laney with one down in the inning.

The Panthers finished the contest with just two singles -- the other one courtesy of Chris Fletcher -- and six walks while leaving nine on base. Hapeville pitching recorded 17 strikeouts while the Panther arms were responsible for just three hits, four walks and eight strikeouts.



The Panthers 14U All-Star team shows off their World Series rings following its championship performance in Douglasville. Team members and coaches are as follows: Coach Gene Vinez, Jace Vinez, Tyler Richards, Chris Fletcher, Coach Eric Laney, Cole Laney, John Ledford, Isaac Cole, Coach Derek Richards, Moses Stevens, Nate Lands, Ty Laney, Stein Harkins, Hunter Fleming, James McPherson and Will Duncan.

Duncan got the nod and went 5.2 innings, allowing three hits, one unearned run and two walks while fanning five. Cole Laney walked two and struck out three without yielding a hit in 4.1 innings.

In the rematch with Union City, the Panthers jumped out to a 9-1 lead after two and cruised to a 13-1, four-inning victory.

Ledford drove in five runs, swiped three bags and scored twice during a 3-for-3 performance at the dish. Ty Laney went 2-for-2 with three runs and two RBIs; Fletcher

was 2-for-4 with two runs and two RBIs; Hunter Fleming was 2-for-3 with two runs, an RBI and three steals.

Jace Vinez and James McPherson also turned in two-hit performances; Stein Harkins went 1-for-3 while Isaac Cole and Nate Lands scored one run apiece.

Cole started on the mound and went 3.1 innings, allowing three hits, two unearned and four walks while recording six punch outs. Cole Laney spelled him in the fourth and tossed 2/3 of an inning,

fanning one batter.

In the first meeting with Hapeville, Union City rallied from a 4-2 deficit to take a 7-4 victory.

Duncan, Fleming and Cole Laney combined to allow just one hit in the Panther victory. At the plate, Ty Laney knocked in three runs and Ledford brought home two to lead the Panther bats.

Trailing 1-0 after one, 3-1 through two, and 4-2 entering the fourth, the Panthers put up a four-spot in the fourth, then tacked on an insurance

run in the fifth to secure the three-run victory.

During the tournament opener with Union City, the Panthers allowed one run in the second and one in the fourth to fall 2-1, despite a combined no-hitter from Fletcher, Cole and Cole Laney.

The Panthers recorded four singles at the plate as Cole, Vinez, McPherson and Ledford each recorded a base hit. Moses Stevens and Lands also drew walks for the Panthers, who left eight runners stranded in the loss.



The Panther players and coaches were each awarded their very own World Series ring.

Meanwhile, Union City overcame a poor performance at the plate and in the field, committing three errors but none proved costly.

Fletcher got the start for the Panthers and lasted 1.1 innings, allowing two walks and one unearned run while fanning three. Cole took over in the second and worked 2.2 innings, striking out four, walking one and surrendering one earned.

Cole Laney pitched the final inning for the Panthers, mowing down two of the three batters he faced.

Union County Softball opens 2019 with Alumni Game, Midnight Madness

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The Lady Panthers wrapped up Summer League action last week before kicking off the 2019 season on Saturday with an Alumni Game, followed by the season's first official practice at midnight.

On Monday, July 22, Union County traveled to Carrollton for summer ball, falling 6-3 to Central (Carrollton) and defeating Bowdon 1-0 behind a no-hitter from Trinity Queen. The junior varsity squad fell 10-5 to Cass.

Tuesday's action was rained out but the Lady Panthers returned to the mountains on Wednesday, defeating White County, 7-0 and host Lumpkin County, 5-2.

In the win over Lumpkin, Union County struck for two in the first when Rebekah Kelley and Lexi Sisum each singled and scored on base hits by Miranda Lockaby and Mary Wischmeyer.

Ansley Collins led off the second with a double and later scored on an Emma Roxbury groundout.

The Lady Panthers tacked on two more in the fourth when Queen singled and courtesy runner Kaylee Helton scored. Collins also scored after drawing a walk and swiping two bags. She eventually came around on an Aubrie Banton sacrifice.

Senior pitcher Megan Bright got the start for Union County in the win.

During the junior varsity's 7-0 victory over White County, the Lady Panthers scored two runs in each of the first three innings before adding one in the fourth.



Participants in the Union County Softball Alumni Game last Saturday night at the UCHS softball field. The Lady Panthers host Pickens on Friday to open the season. Photo/Todd Forrest

Kaylee Helton and Chloe Potts scored in the first; Jaycee Seabolt and Kelley came around in the second; Tori Tracy and Caroline Karnes scored in the third and Roxbury added the final run in the fourth.

In the 10-5 loss to Cass, Union County scored three in the first and two in the fourth. Helton, Potts and Tracy scored in the first; Kaelyn Jones and Rebekah Chambers came around in the fourth.

During the Lady Panthers' 6-3 loss to Central, Lockaby and Wischmeyer got Union on the board with two runs in the fourth. Roxbury singled in the fifth and Helton scored as her courtesy runner. Bright got the start for Union County in the circle.

In a 1-0 pitchers' duel vs Bowdon, Queen fanned 12 bat-

ters in a no-hit victory. The Lady Panthers managed just two hits but it proved to be enough to pick up the win against Head Coach Stephen Mitchell's former squad and alma mater.

On Saturday evening, Union County Softball welcomed back its former players for an Alumni Game.

Facing the current Lady Panthers varsity, the alumni teamed up with the freshman to claim a one-run victory. According to the alumni, anyway.

If you ask the Lady Panthers, they were victorious by a run, but since no score was kept, the official result is unknown. *The North Georgia News doesn't want to get involved so we're reporting the final result as a tie.*

Following the game, supper was served as everyone

waited for the sun to sink behind Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium. At dusk, the girls gathered on the field to watch a movie to kill time until midnight.

Once the clock struck 12 a.m., the Lady Panthers and coaches grabbed their gloves, balls and bats for the first official practice of 2019. Practice wrapped around 1:15 a.m. as the girls headed to their tents to spend the night at the field. According to Coach Mitchell, the field lights were turned off at 2 a.m.

The first game of the fall will be at home this Friday night vs Pickens at 7 p.m. Everyone is encouraged to come out and support the Lady Panthers as they get the 2019-20 school year underway with UCHS' first sporting event.



Right field is turned into a campground on Saturday night following Union County Softball's Alumni Game and Midnight Madness. Photo courtesy of Coach Stephen Mitchell