

Sports

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Softball: Season begins Monday; home opener on Tuesday

Union County rejoins a top-heavy region that features two of Class AA's top-three teams

By Todd Forrest
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The Stephen Mitchell-era officially gets underway on Monday, Aug. 6 when his Lady Panthers travel to Habersham Central for a 4 p.m. doubleheader.

The following day, Union County will host Pickens County in the 2018 home opener at 5:55 p.m. The junior varsity will play beforehand at 4 p.m.

Two days later, the Lady Panthers return the favor with a trip to Jasper to complete the home-and-home with the Lady Dragons. Thursday's 5:55 p.m. contest at Pickens County will conclude the opening week for Union County.

Week two opens Aug. 13 with Dawson County coming to town before the Lady Panthers visit Towns County and Lumpkin County. After hosting Towns County on Aug. 20, the Region 8-AA schedule gets underway Aug. 23 with a trip to Monticello to face the defending Class AA State Runner-Up.

Last season, Region 8-AA featured two teams that reached the Class AA Elite 8 in Columbus: Monticello and Banks County. However, it was Elbert County that finished atop the regular season standings before limping to a fourth-place finish in the region playoffs.

Social Circle, who defeated Union County in the 2015 Region 8-AA title game, placed third in the regular season before falling to Banks County in the Region 8-AA Championship Game.

Both Social Circle (18-13) and Elbert County (9-14) would eventually get swept in the first round of the state playoffs.

Monticello, who lost 4-1 to Banks County in the region semis, bounced back with six consecutive postseason victories before falling 1-0 to Rockmart, the eventual State Champion, in the State Semifinals.

The Hurricanes squared



Senior outfielder Maddie Sutton legs out an infield single during summer league action. Photo/Todd Forrest



Junior pitcher Megan Bright will see increased innings as Union County looks to replace four-year starter Jillian Lawn. Photo/Todd Forrest

off with Banks County in the loser's bracket for the right to face Rockmart in the finals. Despite dropping its last meeting with the Lady Leopards, Monticello shutout Banks 2-0.

After consecutive low-scoring affairs, Monticello came up short in a 9-7 slugfest with Rockmart to finish 2017 with a 26-7 record that included a 4-0 win over Union County.

As for the Region 8-AA Champions, Banks County needed three games to knock off Pepperell in the first round. In the Sweet 16, they took care of Callaway, 3-1 and 8-0 to advance to Columbus.

Harlem would take down Banks in the opener but the Lady Leopards responded with three straight wins by a combined score of 14-1.

Their season would finally come to an end at the hands of region-rival Monticello. Banks County would complete 2017 with a 27-10 record - a 19-win

improvement over 2016.

The 8-AA squads that missed the postseason were fifth place Oglethorpe County at 10-14 overall. The Lady Patriots dropped two-straight to Monticello in the best-of-three, Region 8-AA play-in series.

Sixth place belonged to Putnam County at 4-16. The War Eagles were routed 12-0 and 14-0 by Social Circle in the play-in series.

In last place was Rabun County, who finished with an 0-17 record. The Lady Cats dropped both meetings with Union County last year by a combined score of 27-9.

In order to compete for their first region title since 2011, the Lady Panthers must replace five starters from last season, including all-region selections Jillian Lawn and Katelynn Hodges.

Lawn was the workhorse of the Union County pitching staff in 2017, tossing 119.1 in-

nings. The Lady Panthers' two returning pitchers -- Megan Bright and Trinity Queen -- combined for just 35.2 innings last season.

According to Coach Mitchell, freshman Rebekah Kelley could also see action from the circle this fall.

At the dish, Aladriel Arnold returns for her fourth year as a starting outfielder. Arnold's .350 batting average and .500 slugging percentage are the highest among returning players, while also providing stellar defense in the outfield. Meanwhile, Arnold is the only returning starter from Union County's previous stint in Region 8-AA.

Joining her in the outfield is three-year starter Maddie Sutton, who hit .310 last season. The senior speedster scored 20 runs in 2017, tying with Arnold for the team lead among returning players.

Returning for her third season behind the plate is junior

Mary Wischmeyer. Last season, Wischmeyer led Union County with 20 RBIs while posting a .307 batting average.

Her nine doubles were tied for second on the team and are the most among returning players.

Sophomore Hannah Patton took over the starting shortstop job on Aug. 23 and never looked back, going 2-for-3 with an RBI in her first varsity start.

As a freshman, Patton hit .254 with seven RBIs and six runs. She also led the team with five walks despite not appearing in seven games.

Senior Skyler Ludlum and junior Kristen Poteete saw plenty of action in 2017, primarily as courtesy runners. Ludlum finished with 15 runs while Poteete added 10.

At the plate, Poteete posted a .286 batting average in 15 plate appearances; Ludlum batted .240 in 27 appearances.

Another senior poised for a breakout season is Bailey Rayfield, who returns for her final year after battling injuries in 2016 and 2017.

When healthy, Rayfield provides some much-needed power in the middle of the lineup. Prior to her injury, the corner infielder was hitting .379 with a .919 OPS.

Other returning players that saw varsity action in 2017 are junior Miranda Lockaby (one RBI and one double in 13 AB) and senior Madeline Tanner (three hits, two RBIs, and a double).

The Lady Panthers will also feature several talented youngsters that could see playing time on varsity, as well as junior varsity.

The JV squad has five games scheduled for August with the first on Aug. 7. They will also play prior to the varsity contests on Aug. 9, Aug. 13, Aug. 16, and Aug. 28.

Local Racing results: Blue Ridge and Tri-County

By Blake Lynch
Racing Reporter
North Georgia News

Blue Ridge Motorsports Park hosted a race last Saturday July 28th. Here are the top five finishers.

Street Stock - Coming in first place was No. 14 Charles Devine Jr. Taking second place was No. 9 Jim Twigg. Finishing third was No. 01 Jacob Lynch. In fourth place was No. 67 Sam Jones. Finishing in fifth place was No. 21 Dannie Worley.

Modified Street - Coming in first place was No. 7 Danny McLeod. Placing second was No. F4 Mike Frank. Coming in third place was No. 81 John Howard. Crossing the finish line in fourth place was No. 44 Rod Roberts. Finishing fifth was No. 4 Jacob Parris.

Hot Shots - Coming in first place was No. 6 Colton Koetter. Finishing in second place was No. 43 Franklin Burk Jr. Finishing third was No. 05 Colton Berrong. Placing fourth was No. 87x Jordan Morens. Taking fifth place was No. 01 Brent Lynch.

Limited - Coming in first place was No. 15 Ethan Hunter. Taking second place was No. 16w Wesley English. Finishing in third place was No. 12 Daniel Wilson. Com-

ing in fourth place was No. 4 Trig Parris. Rounding out the top five was No. 30 Daren Dilbert.

Pony - Coming in first place was No. 5w Jackie Holden. Finishing in second place was No. 32 Franklin Burk. Coming in third place was No. T9 Donnie Loure. Taking home fourth place was No. 43 Tain Ross. Finishing in fifth place was No. 69k Keith Hackney.

Tri-County Racetrack hosted a race last Friday night July 27th. Here are the top five results from each class.

Street Stock - No. 43 Michael Harper walks away with another win. Coming in second place was No. 16 Ben Carswell. Finishing in third place was No. 01 Jacob Lynch. Placing fourth was No. J69 Jim Weller. No. 22 Mark Wright finished in fifth.

Crate - Finishing in first place was No. 200 Jacob Anderson. Coming in second place was No. 29 Jason Welshan. Taking third place was No. c11 Michael Courthey. Coming in fourth place was No. 22 Jamison Earley. Placing fifth was No. 12 Drew Deaver.

Pony - Taking the checkered flag was No. 32 Franklin Burk. Coming in second place was No. 15 Ryan Crawford. Finishing in third place was

No. H3 Harley Holden. Coming in fourth place was No. 11x Lucas Beaver. Taking home fifth place was No. 8 Ricky Queen.

Late Models - Coming in first place was No. 38 Jamie Oliver. In second place was No. 96 Bobby Panter. Coming in third place was No. H-4 Levi Hicks. Finishing in fourth place was No. R12 Rodney Weeks. Rounding out the top five was No. 11c Preston Crisp.

Beginner 602 - Coming in first place was No. 35 Dillon Daves. Finishing in second place was No. 25 Jacob Hamby. Third place belonged to No. 56J Jason Berrong. Finishing in fourth place was No. 56C Colton Berrong. In fifth place was No. 41 Jeff Holloway.

FW Drive - Coming in first place was No. 05 Hunter Hughes. Coming in second place was No. Q2 Jim Exum. Finishing in third place was No. 104 James Queen. Finishing in fourth was No. 74 Dj Worley. Coming in fifth place was No. 2 Stephen Godfrey.

Limited - Coming in first place was No. 16w Wesley English. Second place went to No. 5 John Eller. Finishing in third place was No. 55 Kip Cochran. Coming in fourth place was No. 11 Dalton Cochran. Finishing in fifth was No. 1 David Conley.

Date	Time	Opponent	Location	Notes
8/6	4:00	Habersham	Habersham	Varsity DH
8/7	5:55	Pickens	Home	JV Before (4:00)
8/9	5:55	Pickens	Away	JV Before (4:00)
8/13	5:55	Dawson	Home	JV Before (4:30)
8/15	4:30	Towns	Away	
8/16	5:55	Lumpkin	Away	JV Before (4:00)
8/20	4:30	Towns	Home	
8/23	5:00	Monticello*	Away	
8/25	11:00	East Hall	Away	
8/28	5:55	Elbert*	Home	JV Before (4:00)
8/30	5:00	Putnam	Away	
9/4	5:55	Dawson	Away	JV Before (4:00)
9/5	5:55	Lumpkin	Home	JV Before (4:00)
9/6	5:55	Social Circle*	Home	
9/11	5:55	Banks*	Away	JV Before (4:00)
9/13	5:55	Oglethorpe*	Home	
9/14	TBA	TBA	Madison	Madison Tournament
9/15	TBA	TBA	Madison	Madison Tournament
9/18		Rabun	Rabun	
9/21	TBA	TBA	Dalton	Ft Oglethorpe Tournament
9/22	TBA	TBA	Dalton	Ft Oglethorpe Tournament
9/24-9/28 Region Playoff Series TBA			10/1-10/6 Region Tournament TBA	

New hunting seasons and regulations guide available

Now online and in print, the 2018-2019 Georgia Hunting Seasons and Regulations Guide is available, announces the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division. This guide provides important information on season dates, bag limits, hunting licenses, wildlife management areas, quota hunts, youth opportunities and much more. You may view, download and print the guide at georgiawildlife.com/hunting/regulations. Pick up a printed copy at Wildlife Resources Division offices and license vendors throughout Georgia.

Some of the major changes to the hunting regulations this year include:

Non-resident Youth

Sportsman's License: This annual license can be purchased by nonresident youth through age 15. It includes privileges for all Hunting and Fishing, including Big Game and Trout (not the Quota Alligator Harvest Permit).

Baiting: Deer may be hunted over or near any bait on private lands in all counties.

New Public Hunting Opportunities: Several new properties will be available, including Gaither WMA (Newton County), Ohoopie Dunes WMA-6,000+acres (Effingham County); Bullard Creek WMA-491 acres (Jeff Davis County) and several new VPA properties. More at georgiawildlife.com/allwmas.

Mentor Program: DNR

is in the process of creating a new mentor program to help connect experienced sportsmen with those just starting out. Visit georgiawildlife.com/mentor for more details.

Members of the Board of Natural Resources enact hunting regulations by acting on recommendations made by the Division's professional wildlife biologists. Georgia's game and fish laws are enacted by the elected members of the General Assembly.

For more information on Georgia hunting seasons and regulations, visit georgiawildlife.com/hunting/regulations or contact a local Wildlife Resources Division office (georgiawildlife.com/about/contact). NT(Aug1,F2)SH



Brent Lynch at Blue Ridge Motorsports Park on Saturday. He placed fifth in the Hot Shots race.