

Sports

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Softball: Union County nears first region title since 2011

Lady Panthers' magic number down to 1 with three games left

By Todd Forrest
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Union County softball is on the verge of ending an 11-year region championship drought.

With either one more victory or one Banks County loss, the Lady Panthers (14-6, 6-0) will claim their first 8-AA title since 2011. This year, with no region tournament, the regular season winner will be crowned the outright region champion and will secure home-field advantage until the Elite Eight.

Another recent postseason change is the Georgia High School Association switching to the regional format used in college softball and baseball. Should Union hang on to the top spot, they will host a four-team double-elimination tournament involving all the teams in its bracket. The winner of that tournament will automatically advance to the Elite Eight.

Closing in on history, Union County can take care of business by itself during Tuesday's visit to Banks County for the third and final matchup with the Leopards.

The Lady Panthers decreased their magic number to one game courtesy of last week's victories over East Jackson and Providence, along with a non-region win over White County.

Lady Panthers 21, East Jackson 2 (3 innings) - The Lady Panthers used a 13-run first inning en route to a mercy-rule shortened rout at East Jackson on Tuesday, Sept. 27.

Union County added four



Junior Katie Byers blasts a two-run homer to left field vs. White County on Wednesday, Sept. 28. Photo/Todd Forrest

runs apiece in the second and third innings to build a 21-1 advantage before the Eagles added one in the bottom of the third.

A first-inning inside-the-park grand slam by Caroline Karnes opened the flood gates for the Lady Panthers, mounting an 8-0 lead with nobody out in the opening frame. The senior outfielder finished the game 1 for 1 with 4 RBIs.

Sophomore Sloane Dyer went the distance in the circle, striking out four while allowing one hit and one earned run over three frames.

Senior Jaycee Seabolt doubled, scored and drove in three during a 2-for-2 day. Se-

nior Chloe Potts scored twice while ending her day 2 for 2 with a double. Junior Sierra Burnette went 1 for 1 with a walk and two runs, and fellow 11th-grader Jewell Massey scored three times during a 1-for-1 performance.

Sophomore Lily Helton finished 2 for 2 with a pair of runs and 2 RBIs. Freshman Kaylee Rader scored once and knocked in two more, ending her day 2 for 2. Junior Gracie Gladding went 1 for 1 with an RBI, while junior Katie Byers walked and scored twice.

Jaslyn Roberts drove in two during a 1-for-1 game; Brooklyn Brown walked, scored twice and recorded one



Sierra Burnette pulls the string on a White Co. hitter for a called third strike. Union's junior ace went 2-0 last week. Photo/Todd Forrest

RBI. Georgia Patton went 1 for 1 with a run and an RBI, Dyer drove in a run and Peyton Grisham scored twice. Sophomore Aubrie Akins scored a pair of runs during a 1-for-1 performance.

Lady Panthers 9, Providence 1 (5 innings) - Union County locked up at least a top-two seed in 8-AA and trimmed its magic number to one following last Thursday's trip to Providence Christian.

Aided by 11 Providence errors, the Lady Panthers scored in each of the first four innings and opened a 9-0 advantage heading to the fifth.

Burnette fanned seven over five innings (64 pitches),

yielding three hits, one walk and an earned run. Patton led the way at the plate, scoring twice and driving in a game-high 2 RBIs during a 1-for-2 afternoon.

Grisham doubled and scored twice. Gladding went 1 for 2 with a walk and Dyer finished 1 for 3 with one run.

Leading 3-0 after two, Union broke things open with a three-run third, courtesy of four consecutive Providence errors. Later, two walks, two errors and a Patton sacrifice fly helped Union widen its lead to 9-0 during the fourth.

A solo homer to open the fifth accounted for Providence's lone run of the day.

Potts and Seabolt both scored and drove in one run apiece. Burnette drew a walk and was plunked by a 2-1 pitch to lead off the game.

Lady Panthers 6, White County 4 - Union County held on late after building a 6-0 advantage through four innings during last Wednesday's Teacher Appreciation Day.

A pair of two-out singles from Seabolt and Potts helped the Lady Panthers secure a 2-0 first-inning edge. Byers extended the margin to 4-0 in the second with a two-run homer to left field, followed by a two-run shot from Burnette that opened up a 6-0 margin in the fourth.

With Union County clinging to a 6-4 lead with four runs already in during the sixth, Roberts escaped a bases-loaded one-out jam by inducing a come-backer to the circle and an inning-ending grounder to third.

Roberts allowed a one-out single in the seventh but three fly-ball outs did the job and preserved Union's 6-4 victory.

Burnette finished 3 for 4 with a run and 2 RBIs. Byers scored twice, stole a base and drove in two during a 1-for-3 game. Seabolt went 1 for 3 with a run and an RBI; Potts drove in a run while going 1-for-3 at the dish and Patton ended her day 1 for 3. Massey scored during a 1-for-3 outing and Grisham added a run for Union County.

Burnette got the start in the circle and tossed four shutout innings, fanning four and allowing one hit in the win. Dyer surrendered four earned over 1 1/3 innings and Roberts gave up two hits across the final 1 2/3 frames.



Jaycee Seabolt drives in the first run vs. White Co. Photo/Todd Forrest



Teacher Appreciation Day: Caroline Karnes and Ms. Beth McKeever



Teacher Appreciation Day: Chloe Potts and Ms. Melissa Collins



Union County softball hosted its annual Teacher Appreciation Day ahead of last Wednesday's 6-4 victory over White County. Teacher Appreciation Day photos continued on next page. Photos by Todd Forrest

Volleyball: Union County to host Senior Night on Wednesday

Panthers knock off East Jackson, fall to Athens Academy, Providence

By Todd Forrest
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Union County can secure fourth place in 8-AA with a Senior Night victory over Fellowship Christian on Wednesday night.

Currently, Union and Banks are tied in the win-column at three wins region apiece with the Leopards' region schedule complete.

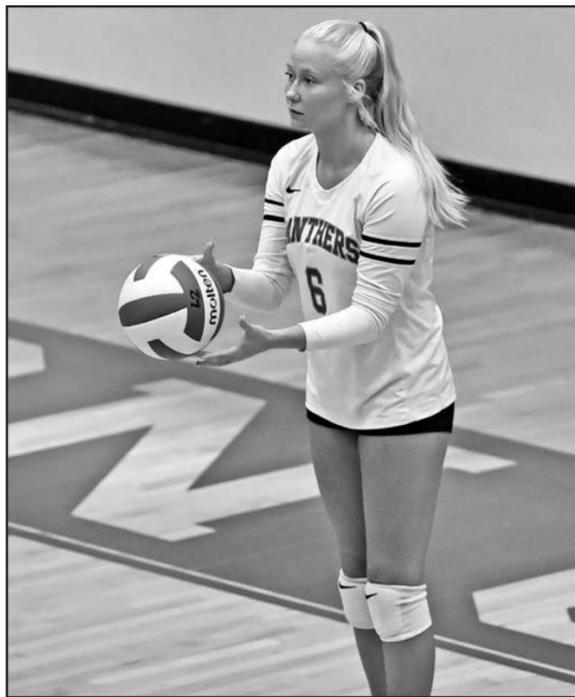
The Panthers wrapped up last week with a 1-2 record, edging East Jackson 2-1 on Thursday, Sept. 29. Union also dropped a 2-1 contest to second-place Providence on Sept. 27.

During the win over East Jackson, the Panthers took set one 25-17 before dropping the second 25-13. Union would rebound for a 15-10 victory in set three.

Senior Kaylee Ashcraft recorded eight kills to go with 11 digs, and fellow 12th grader Sofia Swartz added eight kills and three blocks. Senior Saylor Noe had seven kills, Addison Cross recorded 21 digs and Katelyn Brown had two kills and two blocks. Lily Brookshire chipped in two kills in the win.

Against Providence, Union took the opener 25-22 before dropping the next two sets.

Ashcraft led the way with seven aces, seven digs and three kills. Noe recorded four kills and eight digs; Swartz had four kills



Haleigh Helcher is one of Union County's six seniors to be recognized on Wednesday. Photo/Todd Forrest and two blocks.

Cross picked up eight digs, Brookshire added six digs and Haleigh Helcher notched five.

The Panthers fell in consecutive sets to Athens Academy by a pair of 25-11 scores.

Ashcraft recorded nine digs and two kills, while Brookshire and Charlei Robinson added five digs each. Swartz notched four kills and Noe chipped in

three kills.

Union hosts Dawson County and Fellowship Christian on Wednesday's Senior Night, which doubles as the Pink Out match. The Panthers and Tigers will meet at 5 p.m. with the Senior Night festivities taking place at 6:30 p.m. Union and Fellowship will face off in the 8-AA finale at 7 p.m.

The 8-AA tournament begins Thursday at TBD.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 5TH

@ UCHS GYM

SENIOR NIGHT

Mattie, Saylor, Kaylee, Haleigh, Sofia & Presley

5 PM UCHS VS. DAWSON CO.

PINK OUT

6:30 PM SENIOR NIGHT

7PM UCHS VS. PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN

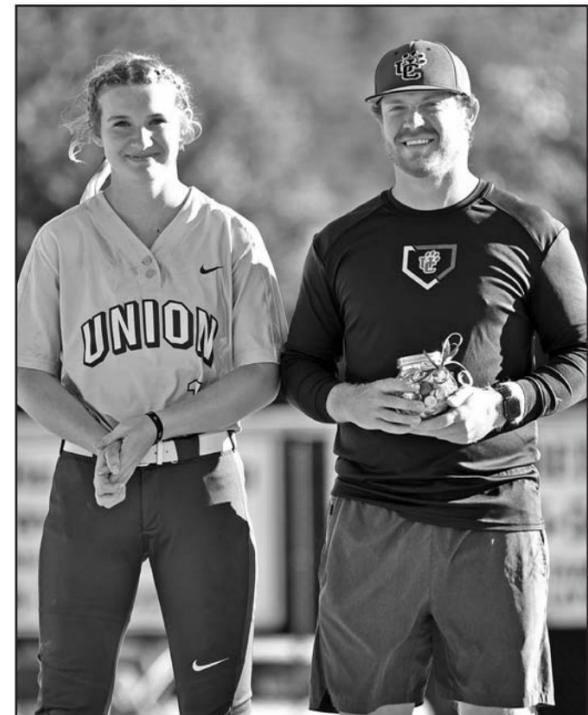
Softball Teacher Appreciation Day... continued from page 2B



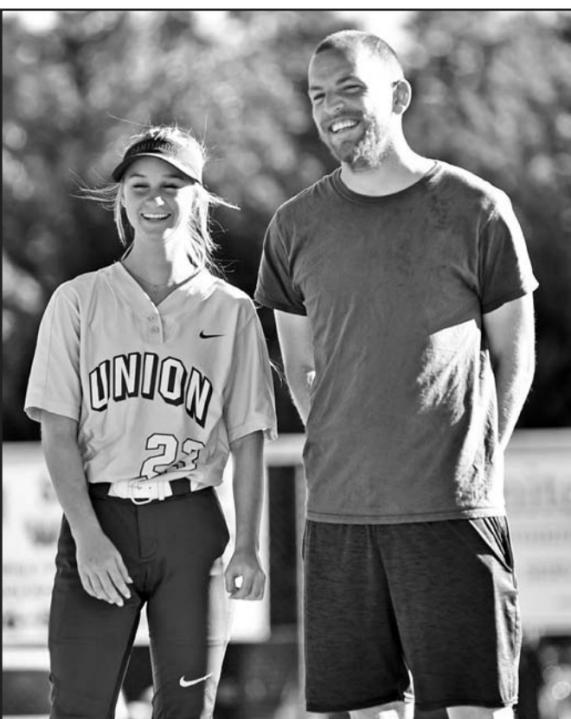
Ms. Julie Hale and Jaslyn Roberts/Photos by Todd Forrest



Sloane Dyer and Ms. Mandy Hunter



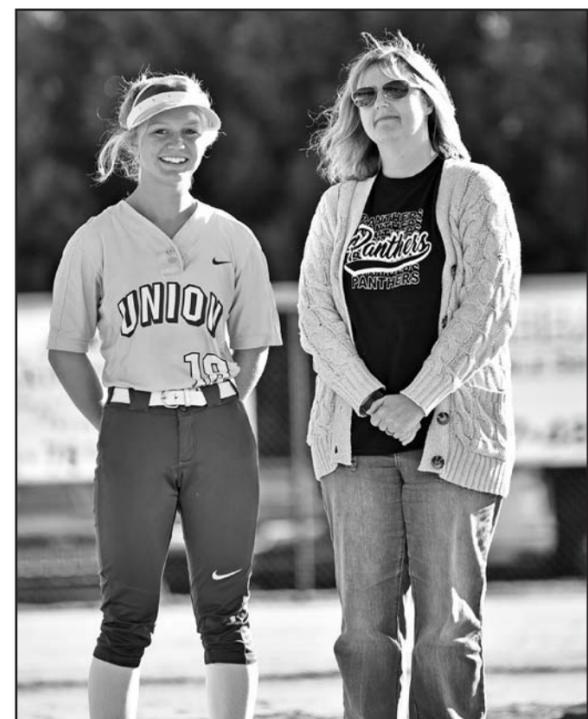
Sierra Burnette and Mr. Zach Odom



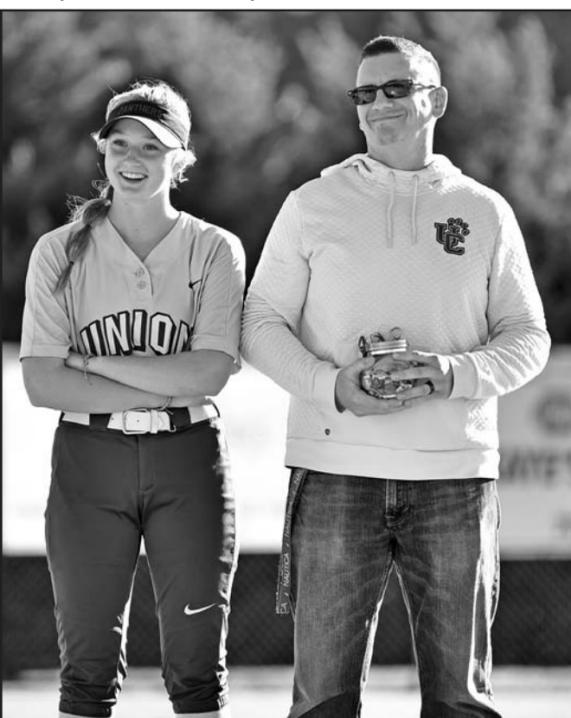
Katie Byers and Mr. Beau Kelley



Brooklyn Brown and Mr. Thomas Nelson



Georgia Patton and Ms. April Krieger



Jewell Massey and Mr. Mark Rehaut



Gracie Gladding, Ms. Alecia Frizzell and Jaycee Seabolt

Union Football, XC and Rec Department update

Union County football returns to action on Friday following a two-week hiatus.

The Panthers will open Region 8-AA action when they visit Banks County at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 7. Union County football will also attempt to win its 300th football game on Friday night.

Last week's cross country race at Towns County was canceled due to a scheduling conflict with the TCHS Homecoming festivities. Due to the threat of Hurricane Ian, Towns County bumped Homecoming up to Thursday, forcing a cancellation of the race. Union County will race Tuesday, Oct. 4 at White County.

Finally, the Union County Recreation Department announced they will host the youth football league semifinals at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on Saturday, Oct. 29.



Junior DB Seth Rutan