

Sports

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Cross Country: Gambrell 9th, Union men 10th at State Championships

Union County ladies finish 13th in Class AA, Hana Gregory places 32nd

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Carrollton - Senior Luke Gambrell placed ninth at Saturday's Class AA State Championship race, leading a shorthanded Union County squad to a 10th place overall performance.

Competing without its No. 2 runner, the Panthers finished the afternoon with 264 points - 26 back of ninth-place Model. Gambrell turned in a time of 17 minutes, 13 seconds - four seconds behind eighth place and six back of the seventh spot. The Union County senior managed to hold off a late surge from a pair of Pace Academy runners - edging both by one second.

As a result of Pace Academy's 10th and 11th place finish, Gambrell denied Pace the State Championship as Lovett (39) edged the Knights (41) by two points.

Senior Hunter Payne came in 35th with a time of 18:58; freshman Zander Rotko was 69th at 20:09 and senior Zach Jackson placed 72nd with a time of 20:12. Senior Daniel Griggs rounded out the Union top five at 20:34 - good enough for 84th.

Freshman Benton Gregory was 93rd at 20:43 and junior Brady Guild crossed the line 101st with a time of 20:58.

In the girls' race, junior Hana Gregory placed 32nd, clocking in at 23:04 to pace 13th-place Union County, who was also missing a runner.

The Panthers' 360 points put them 43 points up on 14th-place Model and 24 points back of 12th-place Berrien County.

Gregory was two seconds away from a top 30 finish, coming within a second of 31st and two of 30. She also finished four seconds shy of 29th place. Meanwhile, the junior runner edged 33rd place by five seconds.



Union County senior Luke Gambrell nears the finish line in Carrollton for fourth and final time. Photo/Todd Forrest

Junior Campbell Chambers came in 78th at 26:33; freshman Natalie Payne was 81st at 26:42 and junior Rachel Reid finished 86th at 27:00.

Junior Katelynn Rash was 101st with a time of 28:06 and freshman Abigail Pruitt placed 121st at 29:43.

Pace Academy took home first in the girls' race with 44 points, edging second-place Lovett by 18 points.

Notable girls finishes: Fannin County came in sixth with 251 points behind a 13th-place finish by 9th grader Carlee Holloway.

Paced by sophomore Molly Jo Wright in 25th, Rabun County finished eighth at 258 points. In 11th place was Banks County with 311 points.

Among 8-AA individual runners, Gregory turned in the second-best time - 17 seconds back of Rabun County's Wright.

The Class AA girls race saw four freshman finish in the top 10 and six in the top 20. With the exception of Lovett

senior Sydney Lamberson's first-place time, only one other 12th grader took home a top 10 in the AA girls race.

Notable boys finishes: Banks County finished third with 104 points behind Buck Ledford's fifth-place performance. Defending champion Oglethorpe County was eighth with 230.

Fannin County came in 14th at 398, Rabun County placed 16th at 526 and Elbert County was 21st at 602.

Gambrell's ninth place finish was second best among 8-AA runners - 14 seconds back of Banks County's Ledford.

Banks went on to place three underclassmen in the top 18, along with a sophomore in 22nd place.

Overall, Class AA saw two seniors in the top five, four in the top 10 and eight in the top 20. Meanwhile, three freshmen runners took home a top 20, with two hailing from Banks County - 17th-place Chase Stephens and 18th-place Pepper Davis.



The Union County ladies cross country team at the starting line prior to Saturday's State Championship race at Carrollton High School. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union County Cross Country battled a 209-runner field and unexpected rain showers that resulted in deteriorating course conditions throughout the afternoon. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Union County men take their positions at the starting line prior to Saturday's Class AA State Championship race. Photo/Todd Forrest



Campbell Chambers near the midway point of Saturday's race. The junior finished 78th of 165 with a time of 26:33. Photo/Todd Forrest