

# Sports

See the Sports Section at ngame.com

## 'Toughest' Panther, Lane Lance, signs with Andrew College

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

Union County defensive lineman Lane Lance is headed to Cuthbert's Andrew College after inking a scholarship with the school's first-year program during the May 1 signing day at Union County High School.

"Without a doubt, Lane Lance is the toughest competitor I've ever coached," UCHS head coach Michael Perry said. "On top of that, off the field, he's a pleasure to talk to. He will make you laugh until you cry. Words can't express what he means to our program."

Lance credits UCHS defensive line coach Athyn Thurmond for putting the wheels in motion on his college career.

"[Thurmond] sent me one of the [Andrew] coaches' numbers and I got up with him and he started telling me a little bit about their college," Lance said. "Everything he told me I really liked, especially being a first-year program so I have a chance to start or make an impact right away."

Lance, who will major in kinesiology with plans of becoming a physical therapist, considered other schools but Andrew was the only college committed fully to the Panthers' all-region defensive end.

"I looked at other schools, but I didn't get any full official offers from those places," he said. "The other places would have probably been a walk-on opportunity, so just decided I would see what I could do in JUCO."

Lance dealt with knee injuries for much of his senior



UCHS three-year D-line starter Lane Lance (seated - second from right) with family and coaches during last month's signing day at Union County High School. Lance earned back-to-back all-region accolades at UCHS in 2022 and 2023. Photo/Todd Forrest

season but still earned an all-8-AA nod by the region's coaches, recording 51 tackles, 13 TFLs and a sack.

"He is a great role model," Perry said. "All the adversity he went through, and he would still show up. You could cut his arms off and he'd still come out and play. I don't think he realizes how much of a role model he is for the younger guys."

Lance finished with

season-highs of 7 tackles and 3 tackles for loss at Lumpkin County on Aug. 25. He notched 6 solo tackles at Providence on Oct. 13 then matched his 3 TFLs in the playoff win vs. ELCA on Nov. 11.

As a junior in 2022, Lance ended with 52 tackles, 4 sacks, 14 TFL and 24 quarterback hurries, while splitting time on the offensive line.

Despite starting as a sophomore in 2021, Lance's

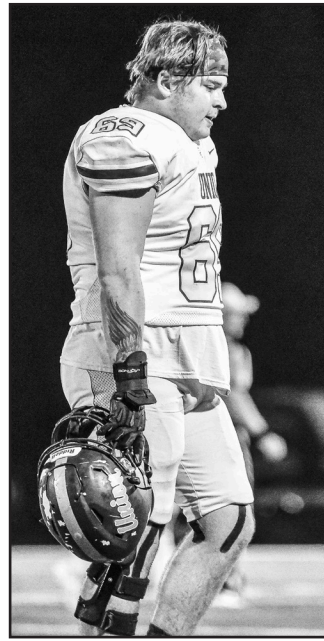
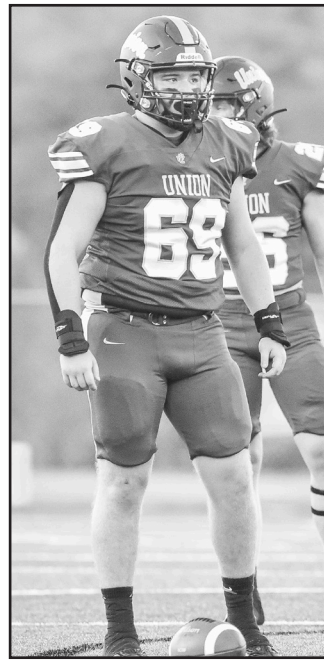
breakout game came early in the 2022 season at Towns County. The junior pressured Indians' quarterback Connor Chastain seven times in a 49-7 win. Lance finished with six tackles and matched a team-high with three stops for a loss.

Later in the year, Lance's strip-sack vs. East Jackson locked down Union's 21-17 playoff-clinching win with under a minute left.

"I'll remember all of my

teammates and the brothers I made through the sport and just happy I could spend 4 years with them," Lance said when asked what he'll cherish most about his time as a Panther.

"I want to thank my mom and my grandparents for always being there for me and putting up with me through the rough times," he said in closing. "Most importantly I just want to thank God for this opportunity."



Top: Lance vs. Armuchee (Sept. 2023). Bottom: Lance at East Jackson (Oct. 2023). Photos/TF

## Collins-Spiva chooses Point University following all-region senior season

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

Union County All-Region 8-AA offensive lineman Mayon 'Mayo' Collins-Spiva signed a scholarship with Point University, becoming the Panthers' third gridiron star from the Class of 2024 to ink a college deal.

"I want to thank everybody that supported me," he said. "My family, especially my brother, I learned a lot because of him. I want to thank my friends and teammates, mostly Jonah (Kluth), Lane (Lance), Seth (Rutan) and Larry (Blackwell)."

According to Collins-Spiva, Point head coach Trevor Zeiders reached out via X (formerly Twitter) to offer a visit and kept in touch throughout the fall.

"Coach Zeiders was real good about sending me a 'good luck' before every [Union County] game," Collins-Spiva said. "I went there for a visit and it's a small town (West Point) and I felt like it really fits me. It's not a big school and it's nothing too extravagant."

"I like the offense they run down there, and honestly, I like everything about it."

When asked what he'll remember most from his time at UCHS, Collins-Spiva answered with one word.

"Football."

"Just the teammates and friends I've made over the years," he said when asked to elaborate. "There are people I never thought I would be friends with, but we bonded over football. And going out there and playing for your teammates, it's just whole



Mayo Collins-Spiva (seated-second from right) with family and coaches during last month's signing day ceremony at UCHS. Photo/Todd Forrest

'nother experience.'

Collins-Spiva spent most of his time at guard and tackle on a Union County O-line that reached back-to-back Sweet 16s in 2022 and 2023. The Panthers' front five paved the way for an offense that averaged 411 yards a game in 2023, including 177 on the ground.

During a season-opening 50-12 win at Fannin County, Collins-Spiva and the line

did most of the heavy lifting in the Panthers' 324 yards rushing - the most by a UCHS team in four years.

Union County also churned out 270 yards on the ground in a win over Armuchee, 277 in a victory at East Jackson and 249 in a win vs. No. 10 Athens Academy.

Additionally, the offensive line, which included three all-region selections, was instrumental in Braylon

Rader's 1,272 yards rushing and 20 TDs.

The Panthers ended the year 10th in the final rankings - the highest year-end ranking in program history.

"Mayo was one of the first people I met when I got here to Union County about 3 or 4 years ago," UCHS offensive line coach Tyler Perry said. "So it was weird not seeing him out there when we started spring practice [this

year]. One thing about Mayo, he's one of the best run blockers I've ever had. I'll never forget his block on our first touchdown of the year vs. Fannin County or his block against ELCA to spring our first touchdown of that game."

During his junior season in 2022, Collins-Spiva and his trench mates oversaw a season-high 263-yard rushing performance vs. West Hall, along with 229 at Armuchee



Top: Collins-Spiva (56) celebrates a TD at Fannin. Bottom: Collins-Spiva during the second half of the win at Fannin. Photos/TF

and 241 vs. Providence - all victories.

To hammer home just how vital the O-line was to Union County's recent success - over the last two seasons, the Panthers were 9-0 in games the offense rushed for 200-plus. They went 7-8 in the other contests.

Collins-Spiva is undecided on a major but has it narrowed down to business or cybersecurity.



# 'Triple threat' Chambers takes her acting chops to Brenau University

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

Union County's Reese Chambers will continue her musical theater career at Brenau University, following in the footsteps of her sister Rebekah, who earned a basketball scholarship to the Gainesville school in 2022.

"My sister went [to Brenau] for a little while and I was able to visit and stay the night there with her," she said. "I really liked the environment, I felt welcome and it's a really pretty campus. It's not huge and not intimidating and I felt like that would be a better fit for me."

At one point, Reese Chambers considered attending Clemson to enter the marine biology field, but she couldn't overcome her love of the stage.

"I thought about going to Clemson, but then I realized I wasn't ready to let theater go."

In closing, she thanked her teachers and family.

I want to thank [UCHS' theater director] Chris Adams, my mom, my brother and my sister," she said.

Adams added a few words about the outgoing senior.

"It's gonna be hard watching her go," he said. "While Reese deserves the scholarship and is going to go on and do great things, she's a



Reese Chambers (center) with her mom Holly and brother Ryland during the May 22 signing ceremony at the UCHS multi-purpose room. Photo/Todd Forrest

gem and she will be missed. "But we'll not only miss her for her talent, she's a great encouragement to [other students] and has a great personality. She's a triple threat on stage. It's not often you have someone who can act, dance and sing, so she's like the holy grail of any theater program."

"Reese was a huge part of the success of our theater program over the last few years," Union County Assistant Athletic Director Thomas Nelson added. "We thank her for her hard work and dedication to Union County High School. We are proud of her and she will continue to be a shining example of Union County High School students,

as well as Brenau University. She will be missed and we wish her all the best in all future endeavors."

Chambers was also a member of the UCHS cheerleading squad.

Brenau is a private university with its historic campus in Gainesville. Founded in 1878, the university enrolls

more than 2,800 students from approximately 48 states and 17 foreign countries, who seek degrees ranging from associate through doctoral degrees.

According to Brenau's website (Brenau.edu), the musical theater program offers "...courses and seminars, [to] develop your craft and be ready to dive headfirst into

our sold-out productions with casting opportunities starting in your first semester. Our faculty members have decades of industry experience including Broadway productions and will help you get your foot in the door before graduation, so you can make crucial connections and prepare to shine in the spotlight."

## UCHS football, basketball summer prep underway; softball youth camp next week



Union County head coach Michael Perry works with his quarterbacks and receivers during spring practice last month. The Panthers and their new-look offense will face its first competition of the summer at 10 a.m. Thursday when they host Andrews, North Carolina in 7-on-7 action. Photo/Todd Forrest

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

Union County basketball's summer practice officially tipped off on Monday, June 3, ahead of the UCHS basketball camp on Thursday and Friday.

Both the Panthers and Lady Panthers will be in action this week, beginning with the girls on June 6-7 and the guys on June 7.

On Thursday, the Lady Panthers will host Hiwassee Dam, NC at 9 a.m. and Murphy, NC at noon. On Friday, the girls will host Hayesville, NC at 9 a.m. and NCC at noon.

Union's JV girls play

at the middle school gym at 9 and 10 a.m. on both Thursday and Friday.

The Union County guys start their day by hosting Hayesville, NC at 1 p.m. on Friday. The Panthers face Murphy, NC at 5 p.m. and White County at 6 p.m.

The JV will play at the high school gym vs. White County at 7 p.m. and Murphy, NC at 8 p.m.

On Saturday, the Union men will attend the UGA camp in Athens, followed by the Piedmont University camp on Monday.

On the gridiron, the Panthers were holding summer workouts in the weight room

and at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium starting Tuesday.

The Panthers will host its first 7-on-7 competition of the summer when they welcome Andrews, NC at 10 a.m. on Thursday, June 6. Union County expects to host 7-on-7 play on Tuesdays and Thursdays in June.

Next week, the Union County softball team conducts its annual youth camp beginning Monday June 10.



1000-point scorer Ariel McCarter is back for her fourth year starting in the Lady Panthers' backcourt. Photo/Todd Forrest



Rising senior Houston Henry enters his fourth year as Union County's starting point guard. Photo/Todd Forrest



Reese Chambers with UCHS theater director Chris Adams. Photo/Todd Forrest

## UCHS student-athletes attend Reinhardt's FCA Captain's Camp



L-R: UCHS student athletes at FCA camp. Katie Payne (XC/track), Noah Payne (XC/track), Ethan Lester (football) and Lily Helton (softball/swimming).

Waleska - Summer programs are underway as the UCHS athletic teams are gearing up for their respective 2024-25 seasons.

But the teams aren't the only ones using the summer to prepare.

Recently, four Union

County student-athletes were on campus at Reinhardt University attending the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Captain's Camp.

Lily Helton, Ethan Lester, Katie Payne and Noah Payne were at camp learning to be leaders in Union

County's High School's FCA Huddle.


A big thank you to all the businesses and individuals that financially made this happen.

Union County coaches and athletes are excited about what God has in store this coming year.

# UCHS SOFTBALL CAMP

June 10th & 11th 9a-12p

High School Softball Field






## Summer Camp 2024 at The Union County Recreation Department

We still have a few openings in the following camps.

- June 17th-19th Volleyball Camp**  
9 am-12 pm, Grades 3rd-5th, \$75
- June 24th-28th Cheerleading Camp**  
K-3rd grade, 5:00 pm-6:15 pm  
4th-6th grade, 6:30 pm-8:00 pm, \$50  
*\*Must be registered for 2024-25 UCRD Cheer to participate.\**
- June 24th-27th Tennis Camp**  
10:30 am-12 pm / K-4th grade, \$40
- June 24th-27th Soccer Skills Camp**  
9 am-11 am. Age U8-U13. \$40
- July 8th-11th Tennis Camp**  
10:30 am-12 pm / 5th-8th grade, \$40
- July 13th and 27th Softball Camp**  
11 am-1 pm / Ages 7-10, \$30

Skill levels will range from beginner to advanced. Grade based is grade you are going into for 24-25 school year. SPACE IS LIMITED and you must register in person at The Union County Recreation Department located at 519 Industrial Blvd. More info will be given at registration. Please call 706-439-6074 with any questions. Our office is open M-F 8 am-4:30 pm, closed for lunch 12 pm-1 pm.



## SCHOLARSHIP SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT HONORING JACOB LYNCH

**JULY 13, 2024 @ 8 AM COLWELL FIELD AT MEEKS PARK**

SCHOLARSHIPS WILL BE GIVEN YEARLY TO UNION COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL AND UNION COUNTY MOUNTAIN EDUCATION NIGHT SCHOOL

\$200 per team

Co-Ed teams welcome

\$150 Business Donation will get your business name on a T-shirt!

100 T-shirts will be sold at the tournament.

**CHRISTI LYNCH**  
Contact Christi  
with any questions  
706-897-4165

Payment can be given via Cash, check, Venmo or Zelle