

Panthers stunned by Riverside Military Academy

By Todd Forrest
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Gainesville - After perhaps the biggest win of the season at second place Rabun County, the Union County Panthers (18-5) suffered a major letdown - squandering a 12-point third quarter lead at Riverside Military Academy on Tuesday.

Despite Rhett McCombs knocking down eight treys, one shy of tying the school record, and scoring 32 points, Union fell 64-57 to a five-win Eagles squad. Riverside's Jake Weiner nailed six treys, five in the third quarter, to spark the second half rally.

After defeating Riverside 73-42 on Jan. 15th, Union appeared to be pulling away again during the second meeting when they took a 42-30 lead with 4:17 to play in the third quarter. A trey and a lay up by McCombs then a driving right handed lay up from Coyne capped a 7-0 run, allowing Union to open its 12-point advantage.

Weiner answered with



Left: McCombs' 32 points wasn't enough to avoid the upset. Right: Sophomores Tyler Odom and Thomas Danek at RMA. Photos/Todd Forrest



consecutive treys before Riverside added a free throw. However, a jumper from Danek and a lay in by McCombs gave Union a 46-37 edge with 1:27 left in the third. Three treys from Weiner, including one at the buzzer after McCombs' seventh trey gave Union a slim 49-46 lead entering the fourth.

The Eagles got within a point less than 45 seconds into the fourth but McCombs' eighth trey and a lay up by

Rowe stretched the lead to 54-48 at the 5:53 mark.

Riverside stormed back in front thanks to a 7-0 run with Weiner's sixth trey giving the Eagles the lead at 55-54 with 3:38 to go. Ten seconds later, Zach Odom quickly found C.J. Byers under the basket for a lay up and the Panthers took their final lead of the evening.

Four unanswered Eagle points gave the home team a 59-56 lead at the 2:30 mark.

Following a Panther miss, Riverside was whistled for a backcourt violation, and on the ensuing possession, McCombs was fouled behind the arc, resulting in three Panther free throws. The senior guard missed 2-of-3 with 1:44 left in the game. Union wouldn't score again as Riverside converted a 3-point play, making it a 62-57 game, then had a 2-for-2 trip at the line for the 64-57 Eagle victory.

McCombs led all scorers with 32 points while Rowe added 8, Coyne 6, Zach Odom 5, Byers 4, and Danek had 2.

McCombs got off to a hot start - sinking three treys in the first quarter. Zach Odom sank one and Byers scored in the paint for a 14-13 Union lead after one.

Coyne and Rowe got going in the second with 4 points each, while McCombs scored 4 on a trey and a free-throw. Zach Odom added 2 more on a lay up and Union was ahead 28-25 at the break. McCombs lit up the scoreboard for 15 points on three treys in the third quarter, with Rowe, Coyne, and Danek chipping in a bucket each.

Joe Collins

Tips from the Range

Last week we looked at how to hit the ball low and I hope many of you have had some success because I know you have been practicing, right?

Really, you need to practice if you want to enjoy your time spent on the course. At least get some plastic balls and hit out in the yard. These "almost balls" will give you direct feedback and that will help improve your technique.

It is difficult to change your ball flight but it is not impossible when using the proper technique. Good fundamentals take time to learn so don't give up after the first or second attempt but stay with the correct way of working on your swing and when you master your desired need, it will stick.

We have learned so far that the plane of your swing affects the ball flight, so let's look at how the swing arc can help you hit it higher. The plane of the swing is the related angle of your arms to the top of your shoulders on the backswing. Remember, a steeper arc, or plane, will promote a higher ball flight.

In trying to obtain and steeper arc, you will face a balance problem that has to be dealt with in order to make solid contact. If you try to get the club higher in the backswing, you will tend to tilt forward over the ball and this affects balance. It will typically cause you to get your center of balance more over your toes and this action will stop the lower body from finishing its rotation. If you limit the lower body rotation, you will cause the hands to become the source your power and that is devastating to your swing. The hands can supply some power at impact but only in a much disciplined golf swing. For most of us, the hands only function should be to hold on to the club.

One of the best descriptions I have read about how to maintain balance is from the late and great Ben Hogan, arguably one of the best ball strikers in the history of golf. He said and I quote, "You

need to feel as though your lower posterior is in contact with the edge of a stool until after impact." This is a perfect example of what it feels like to maintain the counterweight needed to keep your weight away from impact so your arms can extend. This is where you will have trouble trying to get a steeper arc so watch out for heaviness in the front part of your feet on the backswing and the return downswing. Always stay away from the ball through impact.

Okay, so how do you get a steeper arc and not destroy your balance during the whole of your swing? Again, I am glad you asked.

It simply requires you to swing your front shoulder in a more downward direction toward the ball and then more straight up on the downswing. DO NOT MOVE THE BALL FORWARD IN YOUR STANCE! Keep the ball where you would normally have it in your set-up because the steeper arc will change your ball impact zone and will cause you to hit up on the ball more. If you move the ball up in your stance, you will most likely not even make contact unless you are a very disciplined swinger of the club and can modify your weight transfer like Bubba Watson did out of the woods at Augusta on hole 10 to win his first Major.

Remember to always keep your head behind the ball and maintain your posture (rear-end out over your heels) so your spine will stay fixed in its original set-up position as your shoulders rotate around said spine. This is very important when trying to hit the ball higher or you will dip and change your balance.

Now here comes the fun part and something you seldom hear. Swing hard! A more aggressive swing will help your shoulders turn correctly when the swing plane is steeper and give you a more dominant following shoulder. This will help keep the club head closer to the ground for a more solid impact.

Changing your ball flight requires practice so if your desire is to learn to hit the ball higher or lower, get ready for some practice.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

Union County Wrestling sends three to Sectionals

By Todd Forrest
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Dublin - Union County took three wrestlers to Sectionals over the weekend.

Sam Whitmer competed in the 138-pound class, Chase Barnett at 182 pounds, and Keith Brewer at 285 pounds.

Whitmer and Brewer advanced to the consolation-quarters before getting eliminated.

Barnett was able to place sixth at Sectionals but did not qualify for State as only the top four advance.

"I was very pleased with their performance and I am very excited about next season already," Coach Michael Smith-Foot said. "If the boys will come to open mats or pick up some training out of season, they will be where we need them to finally put some of the team at State."

Union County's wrestling program will have a busy



Coach McCann, Coach Smith-Foot, Keith Brewer, Sam Whitmer, Chase Barnett, Coach Byers, and Coach Williams at State Sectionals. Photo courtesy of Union County Wrestling

offseason with Open Mats for little kids starting in March. They will meet from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday at the Elementary School gym (The Pit) for both boys and girls from age 5 to 14 at no cost. Athletes need to bring shorts, t-shirts, and a water bottle. Headgear and wrestling shoes are not required but do help.

During the summer they will be working with the recreation department on a youth wrestling league the months of June and July on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Towns County is also offering Monday night trainings from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. for \$10.

There will be a three day wrestling camp offered by Young Harris College by

wrestlers from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

According to Coach Smith-Foot, Union County will be holding a summer camp as well. "The opportunities to learn and improve are plentiful," he said. "People can keep up with all our camps and training by joining us on Facebook at Union County Wrestling."

Five Panther swimmers compete at State Meet

By Todd Forrest
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Atlanta - Union County competed against 114 teams from Class A through AAAAA at the Georgia Tech Aquatic Center for the 2013 GHSA State Swimming and Diving Championship Preliminaries on Friday, Feb 8th.

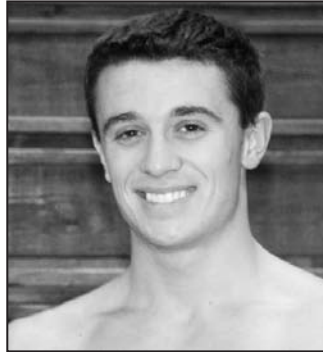
Senior Tanner Gay competed in two individual events for Union County.

In the 50-yard Freestyle, Gay finished with a personal best time of 23.31. He was

seeded 61st coming into the meet and the performance moved him up to 49th. Sixty-three boys qualified for State in this event. Gay also set an Union County school record in this event.

In the 100-yard Breaststroke, Gay improved his seed time by 0.61 seconds to finish with a 1:04.54, placing 28th in the State out of 55 swimmers competing in the event.

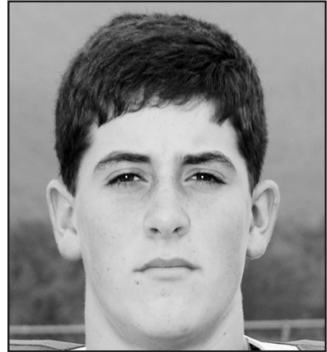
The boys 200-yard freestyle relay team of Gay, Joseph Mancuso, Austin Norton, and Brennen Wilkes clocked in with a time of 1:40.72.



Tanner Gay

The time was good enough to place them 64th in the State.

Mancuso had his best



Joseph Mancuso

50-yard Freestyle of the season during this relay with an impressive split time of 24.67 seconds.

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Woody Gap Homecoming festivities take center stage at 'The Nest'

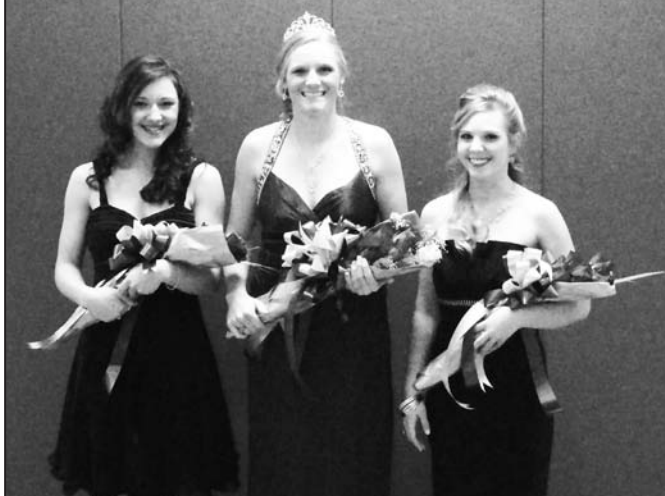
By Joe Collins
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Suches - The Falcon's Nest was the place to be on Saturday night as the students and community came together to celebrate their annual Homecoming traditions.

It was an entertaining event that included the annual alumni basketball games followed by the beauty and pageantry of the girls in the homecoming court and their escorts. It was just a lovely night that was a joy for all those in attendance.

Eighth grade vocalist Kiana Martin sang the National Anthem during the half time of the ladies alumni game and it was done as well as any you've ever heard. The statement was made throughout the crowd that it was better than the super bowl rendition and many applauded her talent.

The first game of the night pitted the ladies alumni in maroon against the ladies alumni in gold and it was a very exciting game that actually came down to the final two seconds of the game to determine the winner. Angie Shaw '85 came away with the final heroics of the game as she stole and inbounds pass under the basket and hit a jump shot in the paint to give the gold alumni the victory 31-29. Charlotte "Granny" Corbin '78 was in tears as the clock ran out. She was the "most experienced" lady alumna on the court and she was invaluable to the maroon team, even without her walker.



Haley Aponte, Amber Gooch, and Haley Clark. Photo/Joe Collins

leader Coach Glenn Kough '65 taking advantage of some rusty talent on the men's gold team to win the game 47-21. It was a lot closer game than the score represented as the gold team found the basket closed for most of the first half. The second half saw a release of a couple of players from the maroon team who were placed on wavers at half time and picked up by the gold team, but the trade proved ineffective as the maroon team dominated the final quarter of the game. It was a site to behold all evening from the entire alumnus that participated.

The highlight of the evening was the glamour and style of the Homecoming pageant, which represented all 13 grades of Woody Gap Schools. Host emcee David Barton got things going as he introduced individual class favorites beginning with kindergarten and working his way up to the high school homecoming court.

Kindergarten class favorite representative was Lane Epperson escorted by Sarah Carroll. Lane is the son of Mark and Janene Epperson and he hopes to one day be a gun salesman and professional hunter.

The first grade class favorite was Ben Sorrells and Mollie Tritt escorted him. Ben is the son of Chad and Dana Sorrells and he hopes to be an artist when he grows up.

The second grade class favorites were Gretchen Mossinger and her escort Andrew Young. Gretchen is the daughter of Hans and Paige Mossinger and she hopes to be a veterinarian in the future. Andrew is the son of Jeffrey and Keri Young and he hopes to be a NASCAR driver when he gets older.

The third grade class favorites were Ranzie Epperson escorted by Christopher Holgate. Ranzie is the daughter of Mark and Janene Epperson and she hopes to become a teacher after



Amber Gooch is crowned as the 2013 Homecoming Queen. Photo/Joe Collins

college. Christopher is the son of Tim and Stephanie Holgate and he would like to become a scientist.

The fourth grade class favorites were Jordan Young escorted by Caleb Brown. Jordan is the daughter of Jeff and Keri Young and she would like to pursue a career as a veterinarian or teacher. Caleb is the son of Mark and Amanda Brown and he hopes to become a herpetologist when he finishes school.

The fifth grade class favorites were Sarah Holgate escorted by Levi Etheridge. Sarah is the daughter of Tim and Stephanie Holgate and she hopes to become an attorney. Levi is the son of Kenneth and Heather Etheridge and he wants to become a fireman.

The sixth grade class favorites were Chayil Aponte escorted by Joseph Corbin. Chayil is the daughter of Sam and Rebecca Aponte and she would like to be a veterinarian or a singer

and artist. Joseph is the son of Joe and Charlotte Corbin and he would also like to become a fireman.

The seventh grade class favorites were Eliza Wilkins escorted by Austin Clark. Eliza is the daughter of Lowell and Robbie Wilkins and she hopes to one day be a neonatologist. Austin is the son of Bobby Clark and Melissa and Ernie Pruitt. He hopes to become a technical engineer in the future.

The eighth grade class favorite was Andrea Friesen who was escorted by Andrew Friesen. Andrea is the daughter of Andrew and Anne Friesen and she one day hopes to pursue a career in writing.

The ninth grade homecoming representative was Heather Sorrells and her father escorted her. She is the daughter of Chad and Dana Sorrells and she hopes to become either a paramedic or an investigator.

The tenth grade home-

coming representative was Nina Sattler and Logan Wood escorted her. She is the daughter of Shelly Sattler and one day hopes to do whatever makes her happy.

The junior class homecoming representative was Lauren Adams and Jordan Picklesimier escorted her. She is the daughter of Wayne and Rhonda Adams and she hopes to become a nurse midwife.

The senior class homecoming representative was Haley Aponte and her grandfather Michael Stewart escorted her. She hopes to one day be an anthropologist when she finishes school.

The girl's basketball homecoming representative was Staci Clark and her escort was Dillon Long. Staci is the daughter of Bobby Clark and Melissa and Ernie Pruitt and she hopes to become a cosmetologist, which she is already studying to be.

The last homecoming representative was Amber Gooch and she was the boy's basketball pick. Her father Joel Gooch escorted her and she plans on joining the United States Navy after graduation, preferably in the nuclear submarine program.

It was a tough decision for the judges to choose just one young lady to represent Woody Gap for 2013 but in the end it was Amber Gooch who won the title. The first runner-up was Haley Aponte with Staci Clark claiming the second runner-up position.

Congratulations to these beautiful young ladies as they are a credit to the Union County School system and to the people of Suches.