

# Union County soccer teams positioning themselves after Spring Break

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Both Union County soccer teams are now ready for the stretch run following 11 days off over Spring Break.

The Union County Lady Panthers have already guaranteed themselves a spot in the State Playoffs while the Panthers are on the verge of punching their ticket to Class AA's field of 32.

"The boys have not mathematically clinched yet," Union Head Coach Tim Hunter said. "In the event that Jefferson's boys go on a run and beat Rabun and us, and we lose our remaining region games badly there is a chance we could get knocked out by a tie breaker. Other than that we are in."

With games remaining at Riverside on Friday, and Jefferson at home on Apr. 19, the Panthers currently sit in a second place tie in Region 8-AA and are hoping to maintain that No. 2 spot and secure home field advantage for the first round of State.

"If either us or Rabun beats Jefferson, then the worst we can finish is third," Hunter said. "To clinch home field in the first round of the playoffs, we have to beat Riverside. If we do that, we play at home because the worst we could finish is tied with Riverside and we would have the head-to-head tie breaker over them."

After the Panthers host White County on Tuesday, it's off to Gainesville to meet Riverside where the playoff picture will come into focus. Although, Union will have a tough time with a talented Eagles squad.

"Riverside is very good and they have a lot of skilled players. They have been a 'Jec-

kyll and Hyde' team all year as they lost to Social Circle but then turned around and tied East Hall who is extremely good," Hunter said. "They are probably the most skilled team in the Region. We will have to play really well against them."

They (Riverside) play quality possession soccer. I don't figure them to change that much. They play a solid 4-4-2 and they possess the ball extremely well. They are a team whose record is very misleading to how talented they are. They have lost games to some quality competition. As for us, our formation has shifted somewhat so early scouting reports won't help them as much. Our focus is ultimately playing at the level we need to."

One of the biggest question marks surrounding Hunter's squad is health.

The Panthers had a difficult task during the last week of March, having to play two physical teams on consecutive nights.

"Our guys are battling a lot of injuries," Hunter said. "We played at Heritage and we were very banged up. Jair Gonzalez is back and should be close to 100 percent, and so is Eric Hougrand. Justin Eigel injured his shoulder at Heritage and he is day to day right now. I'm pretty concerned about his injury as he has been the starting keeper all season long."

The Lady Panthers are also still in the hunt for home field advantage, however, that won't be determined until the regular season finale against Jefferson.

"The girls are in no matter what," Hunter said. "The win against Rabun guaranteed a finish of no less than third. If we beat Jefferson then we are second and we play at home."



T.J. Smith

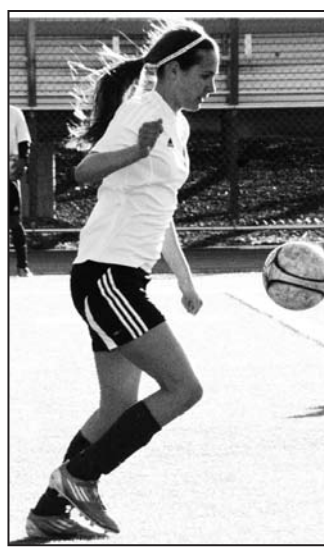
That game determines whether we play at home or not regardless of the rest of the region standings."

Besides having already clinched, another bonus for the Lady Panthers is being injury-free at this stage of the season.

"The girls should be close to 100 percent following the week layoff," Hunter said. "Kristena Zeger had injured her ankle but has not been favoring it at practice so she should be back and ready. Soccer is a much more physical game than people realize. Especially those who have never played or never played at a very competitive level. So minor injuries are as common as pigeons as the season goes along."

During the break, both Union County squads have been hard at work preparing themselves for post season positioning as well as finishing the regular season strong and peaking at the right time of year.

"The big focus for our girls is finishing our shot opportunities," Hunter said. "We did a much better job with that against



Maddy Morlock

Rabun. We take a lot of shots but unfortunately haven't converted on as high of a percentage as we should. That can be catastrophic against state level competition as you usually have very limited scoring opportunities."

"For our guys, we have to not stab at the ball so much and be more sound with our passing. That is something that we have worked on all season. The guys have nothing but quality teams left to face so they have to bring their A-game every night for the next four weeks. We are ultimately a fairly inexperienced varsity so we have to learn how to finish the season strong and take good momentum into the state playoffs. Our goal is ultimately to get in the state tournament and get some wins. Our guys haven't been to state in four years and our girls have not advanced to the round of 16 since 2004. It would be huge for both our teams to get wins in the state."

"As high as I set my goals anything less than a Region title is somewhat disappointing. However, the biggest goal

for me with my players is for them to play with an internal scoreboard. Not comparing themselves to the other team but to themselves. As long as we put forth our maximum effort and play within our team, I'm proud of them no matter what. It's very important for the seniors to reach the State Tournament. We have set a level of expectations here that seniors should finish their career in the state tournament. I want our players to get to experience that and for our youngsters to learn that level of expectations."

Another focus during the break was getting the Panther squad focused after losing two straight for the first time all season. The Lady Panthers proved that they are a resilient bunch after rebounding from their first ever loss to rival Towns County.

"I was very pleased with how our girls responded," Hunter said. "Marissa Akin getting that very early goal against Rabun was huge for us. She shouldered a lot of the load for the team all year, and she really stepped up her play. She beat the defense and finished a quality shot within the first three minutes of the game. That helped overall with our confidence and also kept us on the offensive."

The boys were still reeling from the Rabun loss in the Heritage game. Hopefully the break has helped heal some of the mental wounds from that. As I said before, they are ultimately an inexperienced group in regards to varsity play so we are going to have to really pull together and play well. Especially as tough as our schedule is the rest of the season."

After serving as the Lady Panther coach for nearly a decade, and returning to coach

both squads, Coach Hunter admits that he never thought he wanted to coach boys soccer but this season's Panther squad has changed his mind.

"I am very pleased with how well our boys have played," Hunter said. "They have exceeded my expectations thus far this season. They have a very tough road ahead and I just hope we can keep our focus and keep our heads up against some of the tough challenges they face. That is always hard for a young team."

"The advantage for me this season, was getting to coach a lot of these boys in middle school. That gave me some opportunity to adjust to the speed of the boys game compared to the girls. That was a big adjustment for me. Early in my career I never thought I would have wanted to coach boys soccer but now I enjoy it as much as anything that I have done. I'm very proud of my players, girls and boys, and proud of our teams."

With three home games remaining there is still plenty of time to come check out a Union County soccer game. So far, Hunter has been pleased with the support from the community but with each game carrying playoff implications, the Union soccer teams need support more than ever.

"I'm very happy for the support that we have gotten from parents and students this season. Soccer is one of our most successful programs here and is one our school and community should be proud of. To those who don't know anything about soccer, just come check it out. I think they would be surprised at how exciting our games get and how hard our kids play for our team and our school."

## NASCAR 2013

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

### Eight is great for Johnson

Jimmie Johnson led 343 laps in Sunday's 500-lap Sprint Cup race for his eighth win at the Martinsville track.

"We got into a rhythm and were able to drive our own race," said Johnson. "It's tough to get around Martinsville, but we were able to stay up front and avoid a lot of the stuff that happened behind us."

It was his second win of the season and boosts him back into the points lead.

Johnson dominated the first half of the race and never dropped lower than fourth. Matt Kenseth was the leader during the middle stages of the race but faded near the end.

There were a total of 12 caution flags, and one red flag period, including three yellows within the last 39 laps.

Each time Johnson was the leader, and each time he got a good jump on the rest of the field.

The last caution came on lap 485 after Kurt Busch's No. 78 hit the outside wall and caught on fire. The red flag was put out and the cars were parked on the front straightaway.

When racing resumed on lap 492, the four leading drivers were; Jimmie Johnson, Clint Bowyer, Jeff Gordon, and Kyle Busch.

Johnson got a good restart and broke away from the others. Clint Bowyer made a good try, but was not able to overtake Johnson.

"I thought we did a pretty good job," said Bowyer. "She (his No. 15 car) was just torn up too bad to race any better. We had a good car and I'm disappointed, but that's the way things happen."

There was some concern prior to the race as to how clean Bowyer and Jeff Gordon, who finished third, would race each other. Each driver tagged the other at least once, but it was no more than a racing statement.

"We didn't need all those last cautions," said Gordon. "I made a mistake on pit road that cost us some spots. We made a ton of changes today and the car took off. It was awesome on the longer runs, but we came up short on the shorter runs."

Kasey Kahne finished fourth, followed by Kyle Busch, Brad Keselowski, Jamie McMurray, Marcos Ambrose, Greg Biffle, and Mark Martin.

Martin, who was subbing for the injured Denny Hamlin, was lucky to place in the top-10. He was caught up or involved in four on track skirmishes. During a routine pit stop midway of the race, he took off before the tire man had tightened the lug nuts on the left front tire. The tire rolled off, putting him a lap down.

Brian Vickers, who finished 11th, had his share of problems also. His No. 55 Michael Waltrip Toyota looked like it had just returned from a war zone.

Danica Patrick's day finished much better than it started. She spun out on lap 16 and went a lap down. Near the end of the

race, she got into the side of Dale Earnhardt's No. 88 and spun him around. She finished 12th, much better than her two teammates, Tony Stewart, who finished 14th, and Ryan Newman, the 31st-place finisher.

If it hadn't been for bad luck, Kurt Busch, the 37th place finisher wouldn't have had any luck at all. He survived three spinouts, and a mechanical problem, but on lap 487 he hit the outside wall and his car burst into flames.

"I didn't have any brakes," said Busch. "I could feel them fading a couple laps before that. I turned it hard to keep from running head-on into the fence."

Top-10 leaders after 6 of 36: 1. Johnson-231, 2. Keselowski-225, 3. Earnhardt-219, 4. Kyle Busch-203, 5. Kahne-199, 6. Biffle-199, 7. Edwards-193, 8. Bowyer-179, 9. Menard-179, 10. Kenseth-172.

### SAUTER GETS MARTINSVILLE TRUCK WIN

Two races into the 2013 camping world truck Series and Johnny Sauter has two wins. His last win came at Martinsville after he made a late race pass over Jeb Burton.

We all knew today was going to be about tire management, just from the tire wear we saw (Friday in practice), more so than ever before that I can ever remember here at Martinsville," said Sauter. "The first part of the race, we ran 80 percent, just trying to maintain and not lose too much track position, but still try to run as fast as we could."

Sauter won the season opener at Daytona, and after a break of 43 days, won the second race of the season at the .526-mile short track. Sauter won for the eighth time in the Truck series and posted his first back-to-back victories. It was only the second time in series history that a driver has opened the season with back-to-back wins; the first was 2006 by Mark Martin.

Remaining top-10: 2. Matt Crafton, 3. Jeb Burton, 4. Timothy Peters, 5. Darrell Wallace, 6. Chase Elliott, 7. Dakota Armstrong, 8. Ryan Sieg, 9. Erik Jones, 10. Ron Hornaday.

Top-10 leaders after 2 of 22: 1. Sauter-94, 2. Burton-82, 3. Crafton- 77, 4. Hornaday-76, 5. Wallace Jr.-72.72, 6. Sieg-70, 7. Bodine-67, 8. T. Dillon-66, 9. Paludo-64, 10. Blaney-64.

### TIME IS ON JOHNNY'S SIDE

Jimmie Johnson is Mr. Cool. The five-time NASCAR Sprint Cup champion can afford to be, because his team usually heats up as the season progresses.

Six races into the 36-race schedule Johnson and his team have it going their way.

After winning the pole and Sunday's race, he is back in the points lead.

"I think it's important to stay calm and focused," said Johnson. "I have been so fortunate to not need to worry about Richmond and making the Chase and, hopefully, it stays that way."



Jimmie Johnson, winner of Sunday's Martinsville Cup race

Leaving Daytona in a hole is something we have grown accustomed to. It takes seven, eight weeks to get back up in the top-five in points. A quick start is important. It frees up the first half of the year for you.

"You can preserve the test sessions that we are allowed to have at real racetracks on the tire we're going to race on. You can focus on inventory of your racecars, which we are all behind with the Gen-6 car. Just get your car allotment built up, which is very important to do at this stage. Instead of cutting up existing cars and rebuilding stuff, and on and on, it's important to get off to a quick start. It helps lighten the work load for everybody."

Johnson is eighth on NASCAR's all-time wins list, trailing Dale Earnhardt, who is seventh with 76 wins.

He is second in total wins among active drivers behind Jeff Gordon (87).

Of the 23 tracks on which the series competes, Johnson has won Sprint Cup races at all but five - Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn, Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet, Ill., Watkins Glen (N.Y.) International, Homestead-Miami Speedway and Kentucky Speedway in Sparta.

Johnson's 10 wins in 2007 was the highest number recorded in a single season since Gordon posted 13 victories in 1998.

Weekend Racing: The Cup and Nationwide teams are at Texas Motor Speedway's 1.5-mile track while the trucks race at the 1-mile Rockingham, NC track.

Fri., Apr. 12, Nationwide Series, race 6 of 33; Starting time: 8:30 pm ET; TV: ESPN2.

Sat., Apr. 13, Sprint Cup Series, race 7 of 36; Starting time: 7:30 pm ET; TV: FOX.

Sun., Apr. 14, Camping World Trucks, race 3 of 22; Starting time: 2 pm ET; TV: SPEED.

**Racing Trivia Question:** Bobby Isaac is a former Sprint Cup champion that raced from 1964-1977. What year did he win the championship?

**Last Week's Question:** What was the first year Kasey Kahne ran the Sprint Cup series? **Answer:** It was 2004.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at hodges@race500.com. NT(Apr10,C)1

### Summer Baseball Camps at YHC

2 Camp Weeks: June 3rd and July 16. Three separate camps each week for ages 5 thru Senior in high school. For more information: TheRock-Sports.com or 706-897-2363.

### There's a new North Georgia Idol



Left to right, the North Georgia winners, Kaylee King, third place; Tatum Turner second place; and Caylin Walsingham, North Georgia Idol 2013.

It's official. North Georgia has a new idol.

Eighteen-year-old Caylin Walsingham of Lookout Mountain wowed the guests and the judges as she performed before a large crowd at the Lodge at Copperhead Saturday night.

She walked out on the stage like it was second nature to her and like she had been there all her life.

Along with the recognition and notoriety that comes with the honor of being chosen North Georgia Idol 2013, she also won a full production studio recording session, valued at over \$5,000, compliments of this year's Sponsor, Sean Clyde of C & C Media of Young Harris.

Clyde is a two-time Grammy nominee and CSRA Hip Hop Award Winner.

He has produced some of the top talents in the world, including Michael Jackson, Alanis Morissette, Trisha Yearwood, and Garth Brooks.

He has worked with some of the best known music labels including Atlantic Records, Sony, RCA, and Virgin Records.

In the first round performance, Walsingham walked out confidently and went right into a beautiful and flawless rendition of A Thousand Miles.

She took control of the stage and had the audience completely amazed as she sang with great feeling and confidence.

When she was selected as one of the five finalists to compete for the title of North Georgia Idol 2013, she didn't appear at all shaken as she walked back on stage and gave a stellar performance as she sang her own amazing version of Drops of Jupiter. She is an absolute natural on the stage and makes singing appear so effortless. She makes it look as easy and natural as speaking or breathing.

Walsingham is currently attending Covenant College and is majoring in music.

"Winning North Georgia Idol, and having the opportunity to work with Sean Clyde in the recording studio is like a dream come true. Ever since I was little, singing has been a passion of mine. When I get up to perform, it's not just about singing a song, but about communicating a message. I feel the music in my heart and in my soul. Singing is the only thing I can see myself doing for the rest of my life, and the thought of being able to record my own songs means so much to me. I am so thankful for the opportunity I had to be a part of

North Georgia Idol," said Walsingham.

Walsingham was up against some pretty tough competition and this was certainly a night for talented young women as she competed against Annabell Camp, 16 of Newnan; Tatum Turner, 15 of Conyers, Kaylee King, 13 of Lagrange, and Lilly Camp, 13 of Bowden.

While they didn't go home with the title of North Georgia Idol 2013, second place winner Tatum Turner won a two song demo studio recording session and third place winner Kaylee King won a 1 song demo song recording session. All prizes were compliments of C & C Media. A win-win situation all the way around for these three talented young ladies. While the Camp sisters did not place, they are definitely forces to contend with when they return.

"North Georgia Idol 2013 was an awesome event. I made several new friends, listened to wonderful singers, and took home the third place prize. I can't wait to come back next year and hopefully win first place," said King.

It was a tough night to be sitting in the judges seat as all five young ladies gave a great performance with their own unique style and sound. It was certainly a difficult decision for the judges. But, as in any competition, somebody has to win and, unfortunately, someone has to walk away with dreams of that win whisked away in the blink of an eye.

These young ladies have all vowed to return next year and vie for the title of North Georgia Idol 2014.

Last year's 2013 Idol winner Palmer Mireille was unable to attend this year's event as she is in Los Angeles doing photo shoots, working on her song writing, recording her original music, and working on her vocals with some very renowned vocal instructors. She did send her wishes of good luck to this year's participants via her mother Robbie Derhnel.

This years judges were Keren Leppo, Marietta; Don Byers, Blairsville; Tammy Clyde, Young Harris; and Gail Lynn, Blairsville.

Emcee Shad Bradley claims both Woodstock and Blairsville as his home. He did an excellent job and entertained the crowd with his quick, unique style of humor, and his ability to make the performers feel at ease on the stage.



We are proud to announce that Mountain Valley Motors - Dodge Trucks will present the 2013 Union County Saddle Club / Glenda Gooch House Benefit Rodeo, produced by the Circle N Rodeo Company. The International Professional Rodeo Association (IRPA) has over 3,500 members and sanctions over 300 rodeos every year.

This year's event will be held on June 21 and 22, 2013 at our beautiful covered arena. A huge addition to the arena this year will be brand new stadium style bleachers with enough seating for everyone. You won't miss a second of the action with a great view. Gates will open at 6 p.m. and the fun will start at 8 p.m.

Both nights will begin with a presentation by our very own Union County Saddle Precision Drill Team. They will also perform an additional routine at intermission. There will be plenty of action going on during the rodeo to include: Bareback Bronc Riding, Saddleback Bronc Riding, Steer Wrestling, Team Roping, Tie-Down Roping, Ladies Break-away Roping, Barrel Racing, and of course everyone's favorite, Bull Riding.

Top quality livestock will be used to assure some thrills and spills! There will be plenty of things for our little Cowboys and Cowgirls to do like the calf scramble, pony rides, four station euro-bungee jump, and the mechanical bull. There will be plenty of great food so help spread the word and come on out and enjoy a night of excitement.

Advance ticket sales will start on May 27th. Advance prices are: Adults - \$10, Children 6-12 - \$5 and children under 5 enter free. Prices at the gate will be \$2 more per ticket. Advance ticket sales locations will be United Community Banks, Anderson's Cowboy Store, and Nelson Tractor. The arena and show grounds are located on the corner of Hwy. 515 and 325 in Blairsville. We have rodeo sponsorship opportunities available, so if you want to advertise your business, please contact us.

The Glenda Gooch House is a hospitality house owned by a hospital General Hospital and operated by the Directors of Glenda Gooch House. They are not affiliated with any other charitable organization.

If you need further information about the rodeo or any of our events, please call Gerald Patterson, Club President at 706-897-7463, Art Miller, Vice-President at 706-435-8298 or visit the website at www.UnionCountySaddleClub.org. N(Apr10,A2)SH