

Sports

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Rowe goes out strong with a 77 at State

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Vidalia - Union County senior James Rowe fired a 77 last Monday at Rocky Creek Golf Club to finish tied for 20th at the State Golf match.

Rowe, who hit 12 of 18 greens, was even at the turn, one stroke back of the leader.

That's when the putter became an issue on the back nine, where Rowe shot a 41 to finish seven shots back of a familiar face - State Champion Jake O'Bryan from 8-AA's Oglethorpe County.

The Oglethorpe County team, who won Region 8-AA, finished second to Westminster, making Oglethorpe the only public school to finish in the top seven.

As for Rowe, the Union County senior was an individual qualifier at State and his score of 5 over made him the lowest of each of the seven individual qualifiers by three strokes.

On the front nine, Rowe suffered a bogey on the fifth hole, but responded with a birdie on the 150-yard par 3, eighth hole after he put a tee shot three feet from the cup.

Rowe ran into trouble on the 10th when his tee shot went left. He managed to find the green from the rough, but four-putted for a double bogey.

"I landed on the left part of the green and the pin was front right," Rowe said. "I had to play my putt about 10 feet above the hole because the green sloped drastically toward the water on the front. On my first putt I hit it exactly where I wanted, but it didn't release down the hill as much as I expected, so it left me a six-footer straight down the hill. I barely tapped it and it hit the lip and left a six-footer coming back that hit a dead spot on



James Rowe during his State Golf Match at Rocky Creek Golf Club in Vidalia last week.

the green and jumped right and then I tapped it in."

Rowe did admit to being more aggressive on the back nine, but it wasn't because he was in reach of the leaders, but due to confidence in his own game.

"I was a little more aggressive on the back nine, but it wasn't as much because I was going for the win, but because I was feeling really confident in my shots," Rowe said. "My wedge game was spot on, and I knew I needed birdies and short putts because I wasn't getting any long ones to fall. So I did get a little more aggressive off the tee, but nothing crazy. I still tried to play smart. I did go for most of the par 5s because I put myself in good position off

the tee, and I was feeling really confident in my 3-wood, hybrid, and my wedge play had been pretty solid, so I figured it was the smartest decision.

"My main goal after the front nine was to just go as low as I could. I wanted to post a good score because I figured the winner would probably come in around 68, so I was just trying to come in around even. I hit the ball well enough to do that easily because I hit 12 greens but I just had a lot of lip outs and bad breaks, but some days that happens."

Going into the match, Rowe said that he had a pretty good idea of what to expect and was pretty confident as to how it suited his game. Although the playing conditions were ideal on

the day of the match according to Rowe, the course was still recovering from the heavy rains in recent weeks.

"The course layout was not different than what I expected, but the conditions were," Rowe said. "I knew the layout from looking it up and it was a good yardage and design for my game. It required a lot of 3 woods off the tees because it was tight which was fine because that's one of my favorite clubs in my bag.

"On the other hand the conditions were a little different. They have had some bad weather near the course within the past few weeks from what I was told, and the course hasn't recovered yet, so it did affect some of the putts, but everyone had to play on it so it's fine."

Now Rowe will leave Union County High School to become a Young Harris College Mountain Lion. He realizes that there are improvements that need to be made to his game before he takes the next step. And no matter how much success he finds at the college level, he will never forget his days as a Union County Panther.

"Now I will focus on my swing in general with a couple key positions; after that, mostly my putting because that's the most crucial part. But I will definitely miss the fun times with all the guys during (high school) practices."

As for his days as a Panther, Rowe pointed out several key people that contributed to his accomplishments over the past four years.

"I would first and foremost like to thank God for giving me the ability to play," Rowe said. "Then my family for all their support over the years and Joe Collins and Bill Berg for their support and instruction over the years."

Four awards presented at Union County Golf Banquet

By Todd Forrest
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The Union County Golf teams held their year-end banquet at Cook's last Tuesday evening.

Four awards were handed out, two from each team. James Rowe, Brady Kumler, Kiersten Cox, and Lydia Gray all picked up hardware at the banquet.

Coach Brian Allison gave out the boys' awards first with the Coach's Award going to Kumler.

"He battled every round and he's a senior so we're really going to miss him," Allison said.

The Low Medalist went to Rowe, who was away on a senior trip.

"This award was pretty obvious," Allison said. "He averaged a 41 during the season on nine holes. So for the fourth year in a row, this award goes to James Rowe."

Allison took a moment to touch on the season as a whole and spoke about where this team has come from thanks to the senior class.

"I thought we were very successful in how far we've come over the last four years," Allison told his team. "We've come from not being able to finish nine holes to finishing second in the Region. I thought it was a very good year and I am very proud of all you have accomplished."

Allison also thanked everyone who made the season a success and gave a special

thank you to Pam Gray (Lydia's mom) who helped set up and organize the banquet, United Community Bank and Dr. Baker for their generous contributions to the golf teams.

"Butternut Creek and Old Union were also very helpful for letting us play and practice at those two places," Allison said.

Girls Coach Robby Roxbury then handed out the girls' awards.

"I just want to thank everyone who had a part in this," Roxbury said. "Thanks to Coach Allison for letting me do this. I enjoyed it and it was quite an experience. It's been several years since I coached a girls sport but I enjoyed it. It was fun."

Roxbury gave out the Coach's Award first to Cox, who he said was an easy pick.

"She is taking college classes in her junior year and she would come straight from college to practice," Roxbury said. "She was always the last one to leave and was always working on her game. She then went to Florida and worked on her game down there and that's pretty impressive. Her ability to compete was pretty impressive too."

Finally, Roxbury presented Lydia Gray with Low Medalist honors.

"She was the low medalist in every match except for one," Roxbury said. "I know she works hard all of the time. She's got a grandfather that pushes her and I expect her to get better and better."



Award winners: (L-R) Kiersten Cox (Coach's Award), Lydia Gray (Low Medalist), Brady Kumler (Coach's Award). Not pictured: James Rowe (Low Medalist). Photo/Todd Forrest



The Union County Golf teams enjoyed a meal at Cook's after the awards were handed out by Coach Allison and Coach Roxbury. Photo/Todd Forrest

Strickland newest member of YHC Cheer team

By Todd Forrest
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Chalonda Strickland isn't going far - she'll be just up the road in Young Harris.

The newest member of the Young Harris College Cheer team says the family-like atmosphere of YHC is the reason she chose them over the University of North Georgia.

"Young Harris College provides a small setting that lets students and teachers work together creating relationships that ensure a great education," Strickland said. "I was looking into North Georgia, however I still wanted to continue in cheerleading. Once I made the YHC cheer squad, I decided that was the school for me."

Her high school coach, Elizabeth Plott has no doubt that Chalonda's work ethic will lead to great things at the Peach Belt Conference school, while setting a positive example.

"She is very dedicated," Plott said. "She has the determination to achieve her goals. Chalonda strives to set a positive role model for younger girls, not just in cheerleading, but in all aspects of her life."

Strickland also mentioned something that she learned from Coach Plott and her teammates at Union County High School. "They taught me how to



Union County's Chalonda Strickland with family, friends, and coaches at her signing earlier this month.

stay organized and not to procrastinate," Strickland said.

She also credits a lot of her success to her grandmother who has guided her through each aspect of her high school to college transition. After school she plans on entering one of the fastest growing fields in the country.

"I would like to thank my grandmother Pat Strickland for all of her help and support from applying to getting ready to start classes," Chalonda Strickland

said. "I hope to major in Biology and I honestly don't know where I will be in four years, but I hope to become a physical therapist."

As for the here and now, Strickland just graduated from Union County High School, where her team-first attitude will be missed by everyone.

"Chalonda has been a joy to coach for the past four years," Coach Plott said. "She was always willing to do whatever it took to make our team better."

"I will miss being a Panther because it's all I've known as well as my relationships with friends and faculty at UCHS," Chalonda Strickland added. "However, I look forward to being a part of the Young Harris College cheer squad and making new friends."

Under the tutelage of Head Coach Chase Carter, YHC's Cheer squad recently took part in the Collegiate Cheerleading National Championships in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Union County Middle School hosts basketball camp



The Union County Middle School Athletic Department held a basketball camp after school for Kindergarten - 2nd grade. Later they hosted a camp for grades 3-5. They had a great turnout and would like to thank the parents for allowing their son/daughter to participate.

Tucker Basketball Camp

Union County High School will be hosting a basketball skills camp from June 24th-27th for boys and girls grades K-12th. The camp will begin daily at 8:30 a.m. and end at 11:30 a.m. Every camper will receive a camp t-shirt. There will be an awards ceremony on Thursday the 27th at 11 a.m. The cost for each camper will be \$60. You may bring this form and money on June 24th or mail this form and money to David Tucker at: 106 Sherwood Ave. Box 26, Calhoun, TN 37309. You may also contact Coach Tucker at (423) 336-3045.

Assisting Coach Tucker at the camps will be: Tina Dockery - Union County Lady Panthers Assistant Coach, Mandy Hunter - Union County Middle School Girls Coach, Junior Tucker - Walker Valley High School, Mindy Cox - Niota Elementary School, and Jon Tucker - Tennessee Wesleyan College Assistant Coach.

Activities will include: ball handling drills, dribbling drills, shooting drills, offense and defense instruction, contests, 5-on-5 play, 3-on-3 play, and 1-on-1 play.

Camper's Name: _____

Do you have health insurance on this child? Yes ___ No ___

Emergency Contact: _____

Emergency Contact Phone #: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____