

Sports

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Union County athletics shine brightest during 2014-15 school year

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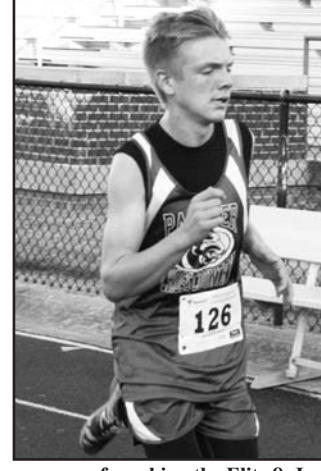
Union County High School's 2014-15 school year is a wrap but its athletes sure put on a show. The Panthers brought home two Region 8-AA titles in the fall as both Cross Country squads dominated the Region meet at Riverside Military Academy. Senior Julia Lindsey, who split time as the Drum Major for UCHS' Pride of the Mountains Marching Band set the pace and picked up an individual Region title for the Lady Panthers.

Right behind Lindsey was another Lady Panther. Two-time defending Region and State Champion, junior Emma Garrison placed second - giving Union a 1-2 finish. For the guys, freshman Lance Underwood just missed a first place finish, but still managed a strong second. Junior Cristian Garcia came in fourth and Jacob Kelley, also a junior, was sixth.

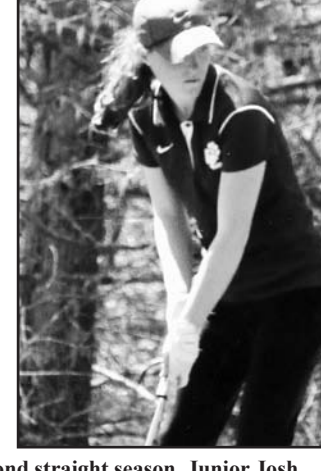
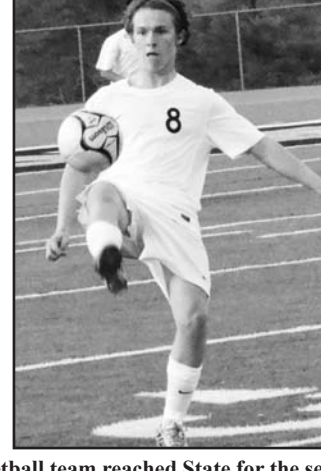
Union County football and Lady Panthers' softball were denied a Region Championship thanks to Rabun County and Social Circle. However, the Lady Panthers found some success in the State Tournament after three straight first round exits. Before reaching State, Union knocked off Rabun to advance to the Region Championship where Social Circle proved too much.

After taking down Darlington in Round One at home, Union went on the road to face another private school, the Wesleyan Lady Wolves. The Lady Panthers took Game One by a 4-2 score thanks to a 3-for-3 performance from senior Crystal Busbee. Sophomore ace Laken Chambers fired a three-hitter and Union was in the driver's seat going into Game Two. Wesleyan would pull away from the Lady Panthers thanks to a pair of defensive miscues in the seventh inning that allowed them to take a 5-1 Game Two victory. Two spectacular, running grabs by the Wesleyan outfield in Game Three allowed the Lady Wolves to hold on to a 5-3 win and advance to Columbus for the State Elite 8.

Union finished with a remarkable 29-8 record that was tied a team-record with nine wins. Junior quarterback Joseph Mancuso picked up First Team All-State honors with 3,078 yards passing, 34 touchdowns and 2 picks. On the ground he ran for 422 yards and three scores. Lady Panthers basketball continued its winning ways with their seventh trip to State in the last 8 years. After splitting the regular season with Rabun, the two teams met in the Region Championship where the Lady Cats connected on a desperation heave from just inside mid-court to snatch the trophy away from the Lady Panthers. In the opening round of State, Darlington defeated Union 69-64 despite 10 treys from the Lady Panthers, who finished 19-7 overall and 10-1 in Region play. Senior guard Brooke Maddox was named the Region Player of the Year. She led the Lady Panthers in assists, steals, and was second in scoring, while joining Lauren Zollinger as Union's second 8-AA POY in the last three years. The Union County men reached State in back-to-back seasons for the first time since they made it four straight from 2000-2003. With a 17-12 record, the Panthers finished third in 8-AA. The highlight of the season came in early January when Union dismantled eventual 8-AA Champ Greene County 75-54 with senior Hunter Hughes pouring in a career-high 35 points. At State, however, the Panthers fell 68-62 at Coosa despite opening up a 14-2 advantage right out of the gates. Despite losing its No. 2 pitcher early in the season, Union County baseball won its first Region title since 1990 - finishing 16-6 on the year with a handful of games canceled due to weather. The Panthers split with the Region crown with Rabun, who was awarded the No. 1 seed due to owning a tiebreaker over Union. The Wildcats and Panthers also split their two meetings during the season and Union hosted Model in the opening round of State and came-from-behind to take Game One before holding on in Game Three. In Round Two, Union won Game One at Fitzgerald but dropped the next two contests. The Panthers finished with two Sweet 16 appearances in three years. The Lady Panthers soccer team allowed just one goal during the regular season as they dismantled the competition in 8-AA on their way to their first Region title in 11 years and their first Elite 8 appearance in team history. Also shorthanded with leading scorer Maddy Morlock injured, Union won its first two



Left to right: After finishing in second in 8-AA, senior Kelsey Nix and the Lady Panthers softball team came within one game of reaching the Elite 8. Junior Joseph Mancuso (9) and senior Chase Barnett (44) led the Panthers to a 9-1 regular season and a second place finish in 8-AA. Senior Julia Lindsey's (112) first place finish at the Region Cross Country meet paced the Lady Panthers to a Region Championship. Freshman Lance Underwood (126) and the Panthers' men's team completed the sweep as the guys also took home first at the Region meet. Senior Brooke Maddox (12) brought home Region Player of the Year honors as the Lady Panthers came in second in 8-AA - narrowly missing their second Region title in 7 years. Photos/Todd Forrest



Left to right: Junior Chase Shook (22) throws one down against Rabun County as the Panthers men's basketball team reached State for the second straight season. Junior Josh Daniel and Union baseball returned to the Sweet 16 for the second time in three years after finishing the season as Co-Region Champions. Senior Maddy Morlock (12) led the Lady Panthers in scoring for the second straight season that saw the Union ladies win the region crown before reaching the Elite 8 for the first time in team history. They also finished as the top-ranked public school in Class AA. Senior Kyle Hamby (8) and the Panthers placed second in 8-AA and advanced to the Sweet 16 for the second time in three years. Freshman Ally Horinek (pictured) and her sister, sophomore Maddie Horinek, led the Lady Panthers golf team to a third place finish at the State Championship. Photos/Todd Forrest

Union County football provided quite a treat to Panther fans from August to November. The Panthers won their first seven games before falling to Rabun County in a 45-31 barnburner. Union responded with a come-from-behind victory at Riverside to set up a showdown with the defending Region champions, Washington-Wilkes. The Tigers came to Blairsville with the winner taking the No. 2 seed and home field advantage in the first round of State. The Panthers would prevail in a see-saw battle by a score of 35-34 after Wilkes fumbled on the Union County 11-yard line with 1:03 to play. Despite falling 50-36 to Model in Round One, the Panthers reached State in consecutive years for the first time in team history

and tied a team-record with nine wins. Junior quarterback Joseph Mancuso picked up First Team All-State honors with 3,078 yards passing, 34 touchdowns and 2 picks. On the ground he ran for 422 yards and three scores. Lady Panthers basketball continued its winning ways with their seventh trip to State in the last 8 years. After splitting the regular season with Rabun, the two teams met in the Region Championship where the Lady Cats connected on a desperation heave from just inside mid-court to snatch the trophy away from the Lady Panthers. In the opening round of State, Darlington defeated Union 69-64 despite 10 treys from the Lady Panthers, who finished 19-7 overall and 10-1 in Region play. Senior guard Brooke Maddox was named the Region Player of the Year. She led the Lady

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State games by scores of 7-0 and 6-0, before falling to Lovett 5-0. The Lady Panthers finished the season ranked No. 5 in the State and were the highest ranked public school in Class AA. The guys finished 9-2 overall and 5-1 in Region play and advanced to the Sweet 16 where they fell 3-1 at Thomasville. The Sweet 16 appearance was Union's second in three years after shutting out Armuchee 4-0 in the opening round. In Region-play, Union shutout Oglethorpe 3-0 and won 4-2 at Social Circle. Ally Horinek and Maddie Horinek each shot an 84 at the State Championships to lead the Lady Panthers golf team to a third place finish. In track, Garrison won Region 8-AA in the 1600M and the 800M race. Lindsey won 8-AA in the 3200M race.

Jonathan Davenport extends winning streak to eight with Fayetteville victory

Fayetteville, NC - For a good bit of the race, Jonathan Davenport's hopes of extending his winning streak to eight weren't very good. Then, after picking off a handful of cars, he got the break he needed, and it catapulted him past race leader Earl Pearson Jr. and into Victory Lane at Fayetteville Motor Speedway. Davenport, Blairsville, GA native, now living in Williamston, SC, pocketed \$10,000 for the 50-lap victory - his fourth consecutive Lucas Oil Late Model Dirt Series triumph and eighth overall since May 18. Pearson finished second - the same position he occupies behind Davenport in the Lucas standings - followed by Kentucky's Steve Francis, Indiana's Steve Casebolt and another South Carolinian, Ross Bailes. Davenport's moment of opportunity came on a lap-28 restart. Francis chose the bottom behind Pearson in the "Delaware

double-file restart" format - the leader is up front by himself - and that left Davenport alone on the outside for the green flag. And as they charged down into the first turn, Davenport shot around Pearson on the outside and sailed away to an easy victory. "I got to third at a perfect time," Davenport said. "Steve gave me the outside and I said, 'I'm already this far, I'm going to blow it off in here and see what happens.'" The bold move caught Pearson off guard, and he was kicking himself afterward. "He just got me on the start there, that's all there is to it," the four-time Lucas series titlist said. "I was just trying to protect the bottom and he just drove around me on the outside." The Fayetteville race was the first for the Lucas series since 2009, and it unfolded a bit oddly for numerous reasons. Temperatures in the high



Jonathan Davenport (#6) makes a pass on the inside during a race over the weekend. 90s and 100-plus this week made it tough for track workers to groom the surface to perfection. A pair of mid-afternoon thunderstorms Thursday dropped an inch

of rain on downtown Fayetteville, but only .06 inches at Fayetteville Regional Airport, which is about a mile from the track. The nearby storms helped bring down temperatures considerably and provided some cloud cover for the surface, but the track developed at least two sizable potholes in the third and fourth turns. It was so treacherous in qualifying that many drivers, including Davenport, got in only one lap of the two permitted. And with some teams only equipped with one car and Lucas races tonight and Saturday in South Carolina and Tennessee, the series made the call to bypass heat races that would have normally set the starting lineup. Instead, the qualifying results determined the order, and Trinity's Justin Labonte, a former NASCAR Xfinity Series winner at Chicagoland Speedway, earned the pole over a pair of dirt stars in Pearson and Scott Bloomquist. Bloomquist, who took the checkered flag in the \$100,000-to-win The Dream two weeks ago but failed the weigh-in afterward, fell out of Thursday's event on the opening lap. Labonte led early, however, Pearson eventually sped past and was on cruise control until Davenport caught, and passed, him on the outside - a move not often seen at Fayetteville. "Usually, no at this place," Davenport said of the traction he got when he rolled the dice. "But there are enough good drivers here to widen the groove a little bit, and I knew I'd have to go for it in the first few laps after a caution before the track got dirty again." The top local driver in the field, Autryville's Scott Autry, was reeling Pearson in under green and about to challenge for the lead on lap 24 when his car suffered mechanical failure.

Union County 10U Softball All-Stars First Place 2015 District Champs



(L-R): front-Aubrie Banton, Jaycee Seabolt, Caley Davis, Lexi Sisum, Tori Tracy, Kaylee Helton; middle-Allie Brey, Bethany Manders, Kaelyn Jones, Rebekah Chambers, Jessica Lara-Noyola, Adaley Burnette; (not pictured Sierra Burnette.); back-Coaches: George Burnette, George Burnette, Tim Tracy, Holly Chambers. The Union County 10U Softball All-Stars are headed to the State championship in Carrollton, GA after winning the District Championship Tournament held in Fannin County June 12th - 15th. The girls won against Dawson County on Friday, June 12th to get them in the Winner's Bracket. On Saturday, June 13th they faced Fannin County and Jackson County to

Burnette wins US Kids Georgia State Golf Invitational



Local junior golfer Beck Burnette wins state tournament. Union County's Beck Burnette, age 14, won the 2015 US Kids Georgia State Invitational last week. The two-day, 36-hole tournament was held at Orchard Hills Golf Club in Newnan, GA, on June 11 and 12. Burnette shot 76 in the first round and came back strong in the second round with a 69 to win the championship by two strokes. Highlights of

MUSA Fall Registration

Mountain United Soccer Association's Fall Registration is now open. Age groups from U6 to U16. You can register online at www.mountainssoccer.org. Registration forms are also available to print from the website. Forms can be mailed to P.O. Box 1862, Blairsville, GA 30514. Deadline to register is July 18th. For additional information, please check our website at: www.mountainssoccer.org or email us at: musa.soccer@gmail.com