

# Basketball conditioning gets underway

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nganews.com

As November draws near, basketball season is just around the corner.

Head Coach David Tucker has high hopes for both of his squads this season with the Lady Panthers coming off consecutive trips to the State Tournament.

The girls will have a huge void to fill, left by the four starters who graduated. However, Coach Tucker still has a reliable point guard in junior Lauren Zollinger who is back to lead the Lady Panthers for the second straight year.

Meanwhile, this will be a no-excuse season for the boys as the Panthers return all five starters and nearly the entire bench.

Youth will no longer be an issue for the Panthers with four seniors and a junior returning from 2011-12's starting five.

Tucker will have plenty of depth at his disposal. Union's bench will feature a host of sophomores and juniors who were thrown into the fire last season.

The Georgia High School Association won't allow anyone to pick up a basketball until October 29th, so Coach Tucker's focus is to get his team prepared mentally and physically during conditioning.

"Basically we're just trying to get our minds on basketball," Coach Tucker said. "We're not allowed to use a basketball and I'm not a big fan of that. Nobody is. I didn't like



Coach David Tucker and his Union County basketball teams have begun conditioning drills for the upcoming season. The first official practice date will be Monday, October 29th. Photo/Todd Forrest

it when I played."

Coach Tucker's teams have been going through an assortment of calisthenics and running drills and won't let up until the 29th, but Tucker doesn't want them to over do it either.

"We want them to get their legs under them," Coach Tucker said. "But we don't want them running too much

because some kids will lose their legs from running too much. So that's what we're trying to do right now and I'm looking forward to the season."

Coach Tucker is still without the services of the football players, but he is in no hurry to get them back and hopes the football team can make a run to the postseason.

"We hope we don't need them for a while because we want them to win," Coach Tucker said.

The season opens on Nov. 12th with a scrimmage against Chestatee in Blairsville. On Nov. 19-20th Union will host the Glenda Gooch Foundation Tip-Off Tournament with Andrews, NC, Hiwassee Dam, NC, and Lumpkin County.

## Football...continued from 12A

yard pass, again on third down.

Bentley and Hughes would drive the Panthers inside the Tiger 20-yard line but an interception in the end zone with 3:11 remaining, finished off the Panthers for good.

In the end, Union simply shot themselves in the foot. Four fumbles and two interceptions loomed large in the Panthers' 37-19 loss.

"We didn't come ready to play in either half and we did a poor job of preparing this week," Coach Allison said. "It wasn't one half or the other half, or any one individual's fault. We just weren't ready to play football and that all falls back on me."

Despite a boatload of miscues, the Panthers put up close to 300 total yards.

Bentley finished with 152 yards and two scores through the air and 76 yards and a score on the ground. Burnette reeled in seven catches for 59 yards and two scores.

Barnett again, led the defense with 16 tackles and Luther Jones finished with four tackles-for-a-loss.

Matthew Spiwak continued to find his way to the ball with 11 tackles. Meanwhile, Whitmer and Dietz are gaining quite a reputation as ball hawks as the duo each picked off a pass for the second straight game.

Following a disappointing trip to Greensboro, the Panthers must now turn their attention to Rabun County where a berth in the post season is on the line.

The Panthers haven't reached the state playoffs since 2001. An 11-year drought is something the Panthers hope to end, but don't sell short Rabun's hunger for an 11th game. The Wildcats haven't tasted the post season since 1998.

Union will be looking to extend its winning streak over the Wildcats to six games despite Rabun owning the all-time series lead at 31-16.

Throwing more fuel on the fire for this Friday night: the Wildcats are also hoping to avenge a loss from last week.

Rabun fell 41-12 to Washington-Wilkes so the Panthers can expect another

playoff-type atmosphere in Tiger on Friday night.

Neither team wants to enter November with three Region 8-AA losses but one of them will.

And Coach Allison is well aware of what this Friday means, so a no-nonsense ap-

proach can be expected this week from Allison, his staff, and the Panther players.

"You better believe we'll be ready to play at Rabun," Coach Allison emphasized. "We'll come out and play the same way we did in our five wins this year."



Luther Jones and Chase Barnett flatten a Greene Co. Tiger last Friday. Jones now has 20 tackles-for-a-loss in 2012. Photo/Todd Forrest

Joe Collins

**Tips from the Range**

D.L. from Hiwassee asks: How do you hit high chips and pitches that hit the green and don't roll very far. I moved here from Florida and the greens are steeper here and although I get the ball in the air pretty well, it still runs off the green. It's frustrating!

Trust me D.L. I feel your pain. The greens here are brutal and if you miss them in the wrong area, and if judging by your question correctly you have, then it is vital to be able to get the ball in the air and make it stop. These types of shots are called recovery shots and it is best to avoid them.

Recovery shots can be from anywhere. Typically, they're shots from less desirable places on the course like sand traps, roughs, and hazards and yes, even around the green. There are many places around the green that can be almost impossible to get close to the pin from, and these are just as bad as being in the woods in some circumstances. If you have a tight pin in the back of a green that is sloped at you on your approach shot and you hit it long, you're dead. Just keeping the ball on the green in this scenario would probably be a miracle, so that stroke cost just as much as a drop from a hazard.

Let me draw your attention back to the first point made in this tip. IT IS BEST TO AVOID RECOVERY SHOTS!!!

Manage your game and try to control your misses better so you can hit the ball to places on the course that are easier to play from. That is the most affective way of scoring better.

However, if you're going to play golf, it is inevitable that you will find yourself in a bad position. Just try and keep the ball away from the trouble as much as you can. Go for the middle of the green when the flag is on the corners. Those are sucker pin placements. The superintendent will put the hole next to trouble and if you try and get close to those pins and miss, it will usually cost you dearly, so stay away from these pins because the price can be to high if you miss the green.

When you find yourself in a bad position around the green and need to get the ball up quick, the "Lob" or a wristy version called the "Flop" shots are crucial to help save stroke. Fortunately these shots can be learned with only some simple technique and some practice, with practice being the most important.

Obviously the clubface has to be open to hit high shots that stop quickly so at address simply open the clubface and then grip the club. Always open the club first and then grip it in the open position. Never grip the club square and then open the face by rotating the arms. You need the face open all the

way through this shot. To hit these shots, your stance has to be open to the target. You need to be able to swing across the straight line to the target to make the ball get in the air so open up with your feet and your body. The difficult part here is the club path and the fact that you will still swing the arms from the inside, of your open set-up, on the downswing. The open clubface will be facing right of your address position and will "pop" the ball out toward the target even though your stance is left of the target.

You must keep your hands ahead of the club to make this shot respond. Swing the shoulders and not the hands and body to move the club. Leave the weight on the front foot to make the arc of the downswing steeper and to help with balance. Keep the back shoulder moving so the club accelerates through impact. Any slowing down of the club will cause a miss hit so keep it moving. Keep your eye on the ball until it is gone. This will aid in acceleration. Keep the wrist extremely solid and don't let them break. This is an arm swing as much as anything. Just remember to move the arms with the shoulders.

This is how you hit a lob shot to a high green. The art to this shot is to be able to make it land as though it fell out of the air, straight down and soft. This action removes the forward roll of the ball.

The "flop shot" is hit the same way as the "lob shot" except you work on breaking the wrist at the bottom of the arc. The shoulders control this shot also, so don't involve the wrist and hands until the very bottom of the swing. The better you learn to break the wrist at the bottom, the more arc you will get. Watch this shot though cause if you work on it a lot, you will start incorporating your wrist into your full swing and that can be bad.

These shots require practice. They are easy once you learn them and get some confidence in your technique but they go against the grain a little. I personally enjoy working on these shots cause I like to go for those tight pins and I find myself in some bad spots around the greens. If you will take some time and get a feel for these type shots, it will give you the confidence to hit better approach shots and after all, getting it close is what matters.

Thanks D.L. from Hiwassee, this question was good for all golfers that play in this area. I hope this helps. Let me hear from you on what's bothering your game. It's the enjoyment of the game we are after and if you're struggling with something it takes the fun away and I don't want that for you.

Contact me at jcollins.tcherald@windstream.net and let's see if I can help. Remember, practice makes you luckier so keep up the practice.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

## Union's brightest and best honored by TCJGA

**YOUNG HARRIS-**Union County's student-athletes continue to make noise both in and outside of the county.

Nine Blairsville residents were honored at the 10th Annual Tri-County Junior Golf Association's Fall Banquet was held at Brasstown Valley Resort.

The main ball room was packed with over 80 junior golfers and their parents attending. The guest speaker for the evening event was legendary football coach Eddie Long.

Olympian Track and Field Star Arthur Culbreath was also in attendance.

The highlight of the evening was the awards ceremony with over 125 presentations being made, from the recognition of the All-Academic team to the top four Grand Champion winners.

Grand Champions with the lowest nine hole average score for the fall tour was Blairsville's Beck Burnette for the 11-and-12 boys age group.

Blairsville's Brady Lawn took home first for the 13-and-14 boys age group.

Kenzie Jenkins for the 13-and-up girls age group, and Blairsville's James Rowe for the 15-and-17 boys age group.

The All-Academic team, which consists of junior golfers with a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher, comprised of Jordan Ledford, Danielle Diehl, Amber Williams, Benjamin Bruce, and Eli Crumley.

Union County's All-Academic team selections were Lydia Gray, Kyle Wade, Elise Schoeffler, Hayden Schoeffler, Will Howard, and Rowe.



The Tri-County Junior Golf Association Grand Champions. Each had the lowest scoring average for the fall tour, including Blairsville's Beck Burnette, Brady Lawn, and James Rowe.



The Tri-County Junior Golf Association's All-Academic Team. Each one of these recipients currently has a GPA of 3.5 or higher. Six golfers from Union County were honored for their excellence in the classroom and on the course. Photos/Courtesy of Tsali Bentley

## Rec Basketball Registration

Basketball registration is still going on for all ages at the Union County Recreation Department, except for the 5 and 6-year old registration, which ended on Oct. 5th. Seven and 8-year old

registration will end on Nov. 9th and registration for all other age groups will end on Nov. 19th.

For more details contact the UCRD at (706) 439-6074.

## Union County Panthers take part in canned food drive



Union County High School band members and student fans

The Union County High School Quarterback Club is teaming up with Neighbor's Hand, a local ministry, in sponsoring a canned food drive at the last home game of football season.

Come on out to Mike Colwell Stadium on November 2nd to support our Panthers! You will be supporting your community as well by donating canned goods as you enter Panther Alley.

All donated food will be distributed to the Ninth

District Food Bank and other food pantries and churches in Blairsville. This food drive will greatly benefit many families in our community just in time for the holidays. (Please keep in mind that out of date canned goods cannot be accepted.)

Join us for kick off November 2nd at 7:30 p.m.! What a great opportunity to participate in a good cause and experience some Friday night Fun!

Thank you for your support! N10c2429CA