

Sports

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Basketball: 12U Girls dominate the field en route to State title

By Todd Forrest
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Young Harris - Union County's 12-and-under girls ran roughshod over the competition at the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association Class C State Tournament.

With Towns County hosting both the 12U and 10U girls tournaments and Union qualifying for State in both age groups, the Lady Panthers put on a show for a gymnasium full of Union County supporters over the weekend.

The Lady Panthers were never challenged until the final game, and then it was only for one half as Union opened the second half on a 10-0 run to put away Pierce County by a 44-30 final.

Action got underway Friday night with the Lady Panthers dismantling Long County, 50-14. On Saturday, Union County took Fitzgerald to the woodshed, 49-19.

Lady Panthers 44, Pierce County 30 - Trailing 7-2, Union County used a 10-2 run to take a 12-9 lead early in the second quarter.

The two squads would trade baskets for the remainder of the half and the Lady Panthers held a narrow 19-16 advantage at the break.

Ariel McCarter and Lara Turner led Union with six points each in the first half; Morgan Warren added five points.

The Lady Panthers seized



Ariel McCarter makes the layup and draws a foul. Photo/Todd Forrest

control with 10-unanswered points to open the third quarter. Turner led the charge with eight points in the period while McCarter chipped in four.

Pierce would answer with a 6-0 spurt to trim the Union lead to 29-22 but the Lady Panthers closed the third with consecutive buckets to extend the margin back to double-digits at 33-22.

Lady Panthers 49, Fitzgerald 19 - Union County used a 15-2 second quarter to put Fitzgerald away before halftime.

Patton added one basket each while Layla Akins hit 1-of-2 at the foul line.

Turner poured in a game-high 16 points; McCarter finished with 12. Warren added nine, Akins scored three, while Patton and Lillie Carpenter rounded out the scoring with two points apiece.

The Lady Panthers held a



Lara Turner (24) takes a shot as Morgan Warren (22) battles for position inside. Photo/Todd Forrest

16-7 advantage after one but it was their smothering defense in the second frame that opened up a 31-9 halftime lead.

Union County extended its margin to 44-17 after three before cruising to a 49-19 victory.

McCarter led the way with 16 points -- 10 in the first half -- on five 2-point field goals, three free throws, and one 3-pointer.

Turner finished with 15 on six 2-pointers and one trey.

Warren scored six and Kamryn Mull added four. Akins,

Patton, Carpenter, and Reese Kelley each finished with two points.

Lady Panthers 50, Long County 14 - Union County set the tone on Friday night with a convincing victory over Long County.

The Lady Panthers may have suffered from a case of "first game jitters" as they led 6-2 after one. They settled to 6-2 after in the second quarter, however, outscoring Long 15-3 to take a 20-5 lead into the break.

Union quickly dashed

any comeback hopes with a 16-4 third quarter. Leading 36-9 through three, the Lady Panthers kept their foot on the gas in the fourth as eight different players went on to score during the second half.

McCarter led the way with 13 points followed by 12 from Turner. Warren finished with seven while Akins, Mull, and Hope Patton each scored four points.

Carpenter, Kelley, and Georgia Patton rounded out the scoring with two points apiece.

Basketball: 10U girls finish second following two wins at State

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Young Harris - Union County's 10-and-under girls basketball team had plenty of fan support as they narrowly missed a State Championship on Saturday at the Towns County Rec Center.

The Lady Panthers came up short to Pierce County, 29-26 in the title game but they have no reason to hand their heads.

After claiming a District Championship last month, Union County immediately picked up where they left off when they reached the State Tournament.

In the opening round, the Lady Panthers throttled Dooly County 58-6.

In the semifinals, they took care of neighboring Towns County, 42-14 in a rematch from the District title game.

By the time Union reached the final game with Pierce County, both squads were showing signs of fatigue from playing three games in one afternoon. When you combine that with a pair of stellar defensive efforts, points will be at a premium and that was the case in the finals.

Pierce County 29, Union County 26 - In a game of runs,



The Union County 10U girls basketball team with their runner-up trophy. Photo/Todd Forrest

it was the Lady Bears of Pierce County that scored the final four points, then forced a missed 3-pointer in the final seconds to escape with the victory in a back-and-forth title game.

Following a blowout in the 12U championship, this Union County - Pierce County match-up provided the packed house with a thrilling conclusion to the day.

The Lady Panthers jumped out-front with consecutive baskets in the opening minute to grab a 4-0 lead. However, Pierce would answer with

seven-unanswered to take a 7-4 advantage after a quarter.

Plagued by foul trouble for most of the game, Union County battled back with a 6-0 run for a 10-7 lead. Pierce responded with five-straight points before the Lady Panthers tied things up at 12-12 heading into the break.

Pierce would outscore Union 7-5 in the third to take a narrow 19-17 advantage into the fourth where the Lady Panthers held leads of 24-23 and 26-25 before Pierce closed with back-to-back buckets.

Kaylee Rader and Paula Robertson each scored a basket in the final frame while Lola Hunter hit 5-of-6 from the free throw line.

Robertson led Union County with 10 points; Hunter and Jordane Mullinack scored five points each, Rader finished with four, and Aubrie Akins added two.

Lady Panthers 42, Towns County 14 - Union County took control early with leads of 13-3 after one and 28-3 at the half.

The third quarter saw the



Union County dancing its way into the state finals. Photo/Todd Forrest

Lady Panthers extend its lead to 40-10, resulting in a running clock during the fourth.

Sloane Dyer led Union with nine points while Robertson and Rader added eight points each.

Hunter, Aayla Stepp, and Riley Voss scored four apiece; Akins scored three and Mullinack had two.

Lady Panthers 58, Dooly County 6 - Union County jumped out front 14-2 in the first quarter and never looked back.

After taking a 34-5 half-

time lead, the Lady Panthers pitched a shutout in the third quarter, 18-0, then went on to outscore Dooly, 6-1 in the fourth with a running clock.

Robertson scored 14 of her game-high 20 points in the first half while Rader tallied all of her 16 points through three quarters.

Akins finished with seven points, Stepp had six, and Reese Jones added three.

Dyer, Hunter, and Voss each chipped in two points apiece.

Soccer: Panthers fall at 8th ranked Dawson; vs 3rd ranked East Hall

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When the 2018 Union County soccer schedule was released, Head Coach Leland Sarrell knew the first week of March would be brutal.

On Tuesday, the Panthers traveled to No. 8 Dawson County and came out on the wrong end of a 1-0 score; on Friday they were shutout 6-0 by East Hall at home.

In the 11th minute at Dawson, Union County was unable to take advantage of a 1-on-1, breakaway opportunity. The game would remain scoreless until the 29th minute when Dawson County got on the board.

The Panthers caught a tough break early in the second half when Kolby Ives drew a foul inside the box but Union wasn't awarded a penalty kick because the official incorrectly ruled that he was outside the box, despite photos proving otherwise.

Later in the game, the Panthers dodged a bullet when Dawson couldn't take advantage of an open goal with 14:15 remaining.

Union County was unable to capitalize off the Tiger miscue in the final minutes - in which



Kolby Ives (right) goes down after getting fouled inside the box but no PK was awarded. Photo/Todd Forrest

time was kept on the field due to the scoreboard clock malfunctioning.

On Friday, the Panthers hosted 3rd ranked East Hall, who lost 1-0 to Pace Academy in last year's State Championship Game.

Like the Dawson game, both teams went scoreless until the 29th minute, when the Vikings exploded for three goals

in less than 10 minutes.

East Hall tacked on three more goals in the second half to take a 6-0 victory.

Not only did the Vikings reach the state finals in 2017, they fell one goal short of a state title in 2016 - losing to Decatur, 3-2.

Up next for the Panthers is a region contest at Fannin on Tuesday. Union County fell 1-0

to the Rebels earlier this season in a non-region affair.

On Friday, the Panthers will visit Darlington where the guys will play at 5:30 with the girls to follow. Darlington is also coming off a loss to East Hall by a score of 4-1.

At Fannin County, the girls will get underway at 5 p.m. with the guys to follow.



Union County prior to the East Hall game. Photo/Todd Forrest

2018 Pickleball Youth Clinic

On behalf of the Blairsville Pickleball Club we are proud to announce our first Pickleball Youth Clinic ages 12 - 14.

The game of Pickleball is a new and growing sport becoming popular all across the nation. There are several local Pickleball Clubs in the north Georgia area and surrounding counties. Union County currently has a large membership of more than 170 members. Pickleball is a wonderful sport that can be fun, healthy, and enjoyed by players of all

ages. We are excited to offer this free Clinic to the youth of Union County.

The clinic will be held at Meek's Park Tennis/Pickleball Courts on June 4th, 5th, and 6th from 8:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Application packets are available at the Union County Recreation Dept., 310 Wellborn Street, Blairsville, GA. Space will be limited to first 16 participants only. Participants will receive a letter notifying you of acceptance in the clinic. Deadline for registration is May 1, 2018. NMar7,2018,CA