

Sports

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Softball: Season underway Thursday, home opener Saturday

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The first pitch of the Lady Panthers' 2024 season is slated for Thursday, Aug. 1 at Pickens County, followed by the home opener on Saturday, Aug. 3 vs. Woodland (Cartersville).

Additionally, Thursday marks the beginning of long-time assistant Robby Roxbury's tenure as head coach. Year one under Roxbury will feature many new faces in the starting nine following the graduation of five senior starters instrumental in a Region 8-AA Championship (2022), one Elite Eight appearance (2022) and 10 State playoff victories between 2021-2023.

Headlining Union County's returners in 2024 are sophomore Izzy Anthros and senior Sloane Dyer.

While serving as the ace of the Union County pitching staff in 2023, Anthros ranked among the top three in nearly every offensive category, leading the team in doubles (7) and triples (4). Meanwhile, her 4 homers, 27 RBIs, a .711 SLG% and a 1.122 OPS were each good enough for second best.

Anthros' 27 hits placed her third among her teammates, and her .355 batting average was fifth.

However, as the calendar flipped to October, Anthros started to heat up, hitting .563 with 3 HRs and 11 RBIs over the last six games.

In the circle, Anthros worked 111 of the staff's 142 innings, compiling an 11-9 record, a 2.27 ERA, a 1.29 WHIP, 126 strikeouts and 51 walks.

As for Dyer, the corner infielder's .382 average, .476 OBP, 23 runs and 12 walks from a year ago are tops among returning players. She placed third with 20 RBIs in 2023 and her four doubles tied for third. Highlighting Dyer's junior



Rising sophomore pitcher Izzy Anthros belts one of her four home runs during her freshman season in 2023. Photo/Todd Forrest

campaign was a 4-hit game at Gilmer and a 3-hit outing vs. East Jackson.

Returning senior Lily Helton is coming off a breakout junior season in which she hit .380 with a .906 OPS, four doubles and 13 RBIs.

Others to watch are Ella Akins, Mikayla Souther, Peyton Grisham, Ayla Jamison, Zady Ludlum, Delaney Moses, Jaslyn Roberts, Jules Dyer and freshmen Addison Whitener and Stella Collins.

In another boost to their depth, the Lady Panthers picked up a pair of incoming

seniors: Jordane Mullinack (OF) and Reece Kelley (IF).

Heading into the fall, Jamison and Roberts are the leading options to back up Anthros in the pitcher's circle.

Roxbury will have some significant holes to fill with the departure of five outgoing seniors -- three of which are playing at the next level. Gracie Gladding (Dayton), Jewell Massey (Reinhardt), Georgia Patton (Truett), Brooklyn Brown and Katie Byers.

A year ago, the five seniors combined for 129 of the Lady Panthers' 215 hits, 10 of

their 14 homers, 30 of their 57 extra-base hits, 79 of the 154 RBIs and 22 of their 36 stolen bases.

If Union County hopes to advance to its seventh consecutive postseason, they young squad must navigate a brand new region.

Region 7-AA is headlined by reigning champ Rockmart, who advanced to the Elite Eight in 2023 after defeating Union County two out of three in a thrilling Super Regional.

Others joining the region are Sonorville (Class AAAA Elite Eight), North Cobb Chris-

DATE	OPPONENT (R) = Region Play, @ = Host Location, vs. = Additional Team	LOCATION	TEAM	TIME
August 1	Pickens County - Dragons 500 Dragon Dr., Jasper, GA	Away	Varsity	4:00 / 6:00 PM
August 2	Lumpkin County - Indians 2001 Indian Dr., Dalton, GA	Away	JV	5:00 PM
August 3	Woodland High School - Wildcats	Home	Varsity	12:00 / 2:00 PM
August 6	White County - Warriors	Home	JV / Varsity	4:00 / 6:00 PM
August 8	Dawson County - Tigers	Home	JV / Varsity	4:00 / 6:00 PM
August 10	vs. Alcorn - Tigers Prince Avenue - Wolverines 2201 Ruth Jackson Rd., Bogart, GA	Away	Varsity Varsity	11:00 PM 1:00 PM
August 12	White County - Warriors 2900 Hwy 129 North, Cleveland, GA	Away	JV / Varsity	4:00 / 6:00 PM
August 15	Rockmart - Yellow Jackets (R) 990 Cartersville Hwy., Rockmart, GA	Away	Varsity	5:30 PM
August 16	Tallulah Falls - Indians	Home	JV	4:30/6:00
August 17	@ Lumpkin County - Indians vs. Lanier High School - Longhorns 2001 Indian Dr., Dalton, GA	Away	Varsity Varsity	10:00 AM 12:00 PM
August 20	North Murray - Mountaineers (R)	Home	Varsity	5:30 PM
August 22	Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe (LFO) - Warriors (R) 1850 Battlefield Pkwy, Fort Oglethorpe, GA	Away	Varsity	5:30 PM
August 23	Gilmer County - Bobcats	Home	JV	4:30 / 6:00 PM
August 26,	Gilmer County - Bobcats 408 Bobcat Trail, Ellijay, GA	Away	JV	4:30 PM
August 27	Sonorville - Phoenix (R)	Home	Varsity	5:30 PM
August 29	Ringold - Tigers (R) 28 Tiger Trail, Ringgold, GA	Away	Varsity	5:30 PM
September 5	Murray County - Indians (R)	Home	Varsity	5:30 PM
September 6	Pickens County - Dragons	Home	JV	4:00 / 6:00 PM
September 9	North Cobb Christian - Eagles (R)	Away	Varsity	5:30 PM
September 10	Coahulla Creek - Colts (R)	Home	Varsity	5:30 PM
September 12	Rockmart - Yellow Jackets (R)	Home	Varsity	5:30 PM
September 17	North Murray - Mountaineers (R) 2568 Mount Carmel Church Road, Chatsworth, GA	Away	Varsity	5:30 PM
September 19	Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe (LFO) - Warriors (R)	Home	Varsity	5:30 PM
September 21	Gilmer County - Bobcats	Home	Varsity	10:00 AM
September 23	Lumpkin County - Indians	Home	JV	5:00 PM
September 24	Sonorville - Phoenix (R) 7340 Fairmount Hwy SE, Calhoun, GA	Away	Varsity	5:30 PM
September 26	Ringgold - Tigers (R)	Home	Varsity	5:30 PM
October 1	Murray County - Indians (R) 1001 Green Rd., Chatsworth, GA	Away	Varsity	5:30 PM
October 3	North Cobb Christian - Eagles (R)	Home	Varsity	5:30 PM
October 6	Coahulla Creek - Colts (R) 3361 Crow Rd. NE, Dalton, GA	Away	Varsity	5:30 PM
October 9	White County - Warriors 2600 Hwy 129 North, Cleveland, GA	Away	Varsity	5:30 PM
October 14-15	1st Round of State			
October 21-22	2nd Round of State			

County 9-16, fifth in 7-AA team); Ringgold (9-14 in Class AAA); Coahulla Creek (Class AAA playoff team) and Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe (6-15 in Class AAA).

Region 7-AA holdovers include North Murray (11-16, fourth in 7-AA) and Murray

County 9-16, fifth in 7-AA) at Pickens on Thursday begins at 4 p.m. Saturday's home contest starts at noon vs. Woodland (Cartersville).

The Lady Panthers JV will travel to Lumpkin County on Friday, Aug. 2.



Rising senior Sloane Dyer is Union County's leading returner in four offensive categories, including batting average and OBP. Photo/Todd Forrest



Rising senior infielder Lily Helton was one of Union County's most consistent hitters in 2023, batting .380 with a .906 OPS, four doubles and 13 RBIs. Photo/Todd Forrest