

Panthers...from Page 1A

ments by a combined score of 51-0. They faced Cleveland in the season's third game. They won that one by a score of 18-13.

It wasn't until the season's fourth game that a Panther football team ever tasted defeat. It was a dreaded, heartbreaking loss to East Fannin.

The final score of that game was oh so close, 18-14.

"I remember that game well, it was so cold," Mayor Conley said.

That loss started a losing streak as the Panthers were downed by Madison County the following week 35-13.

It was the last game the Panthers would lose in 1957, as they shut out their final opponents by a combined score of 70-0.



Members of the first football team in Union County Panther history are trying to leave a legacy for past, present and future generations. Photo/Charles Duncan

McAfee, Max Helton, Roy Dyer and Charles Owenby became the first

gridiron legends in Union County football history.

The other 22 Pan-

thers on that 1957 team went on to legendary status in later years. And, the rest as they say is history.

Mayor Conley said for those who wish to donate to the cause, contact the Class of 1957's Bill Parker, or Union County Quarterback Club President Gary Rogers.

Qualifying...from Page 1A

combining the two calendars into one streamlined schedule, the state will be able to conserve both state resources and taxpayer dollars."

The move was necessary after U.S. District Judge Steve Jones changed the scope of Georgia elections, with his July 2013 ruling that the state's election calendar, which has traditionally scheduled the primary elections for state and federal offices on the third Tuesday in July, violated the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986.

That law requires the state to send absentee ballots to military and overseas vot-

ers 45 days before any federal election.

HB 310 resets the local and state calendar to coincide with the federal elections calendar. While qualifying for all elections will be set as March 3, through March 7, the joint primary date will be changed from the third Tuesday in July to May 20.

Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp said the bill now goes to Gov. Nathan Deal for his signature.

"I want to thank House and Senate leaders for passing this important piece of legislation the first week of the legislative session," Kemp said. "Gov. Deal and mem-

bers of the General Assembly showed tremendous leadership in ensuring that Georgia voters will continue to have a uniform voting calendar rather than two separate calendars for federal and state elections.

"This would have been a tremendous fiscal cost to the counties and incredibly confusing for Georgia voters (without the legislative correction)," Kemp said. "As Georgia's Chief Elections Officer, I will continue to work each day to make sure Georgia has a secure, accessible and fair elections process."

Shelby...from Page 1A

The seizure process was filed by the Enotah Circuit District Attorney's Office and subsequently, the Shelby Mustang was awarded to the Sheriff's Office.

The order from Union County Superior Court gave Sheriff Mason discretion to use the car, or dispose of it however he saw fit - sale, auction or trade.

Two regional Ford dealerships provide the Union County Sheriff's Office with sales and service.

They are Jackie Jones Ford of Hayesville, NC and King Ford of Murphy, NC.

Both of these dealerships were given the oppor-

tunity to bid on the seized vehicle, a 2011 Ford Shelby GT500 Mustang with 550 Horse Power.

The Sheriff's decision was to offer the Mustang in trade for a new 2014 Ford Police Interceptor Patrol Car and a reserve minimum bid of an additional \$8,000 in cash.

The sealed bids were presented to Sheriff Mason on Wednesday, Jan. 8 at 10 a.m.

Representatives from both Jacky Jones Ford and King Ford were present.

The bids they presented offered the new patrol vehicle as requested in trade and a generous amount in cash above the minimum bid.

King Ford offered the highest amount, which consisted of the new Ford Interceptor and \$19,000 cash, and was subsequently awarded the bid.

This makes a total of almost \$45,000 realized from this drug-related seizure/transaction - \$19,000 cash plus approximately \$26,000 value for the 2014 Ford Interceptor.

The generous return from the Shelby Mustang only confirms what Sheriff Mason has said all along about his department's departure from the Appalachian Drug Task Force - 90 percent of a drug-related financial seizure is better than zero percent.

From the Gold Dome

Every January, legislators from across the state convene at the Georgia State Capitol to set the course for Georgia's future. Because 2014 is the second half of a legislative biennial term, bills that did not pass in 2013 are still eligible for consideration in addition to the new bills introduced this year - which means legislators have a significant pile of work (literally, when you think about the stacks of printed bills on our desks...) ahead of us.

That said, legislators quickly got down to work on Monday, Jan. 13, the first day of the legislative session. 2014 will be the year of a shorter, more efficient session for several reasons.

First, there is pressure to reach Day 40 earlier than previous years because of a shift in election qualifying dates.

Georgia is now required to have at least 45 days of absentee balloting before the date of a runoff or primary election where a federal candidate is on the ballot, which means qualifying for public office will begin on March 3, 2014 and run through March 7, 2014.

Second - and more importantly - a shorter legislative session saves Georgia taxpayers a substantial amount of money in per diem and temporary workers salary costs.

The shift in election qualifying dates has not only encouraged a shorter legislative session, but it brought the first piece of legislation to the Senate floor in 2014.

House Bill 310 has passed the Senate by substitute and if enacted, will revise the schedule of state and local candidate elections to correspond with federal candidate election dates.

Maintaining two separate election calendars places a heavy burden on state resources and would likely require a costly update to technology infrastructure.

By combining the two calendars into one streamlined schedule, the state will be able to conserve both state resources and taxpayer dollars.

Gov. Nathan Deal also presented his annual "State of the State" address during the



Sen. Steve Gooch

first week of session, highlighting the steps our state has taken to preserve our state's fiscally responsible reputation.

As a result, Georgia businesses have added approximately 217,000 new jobs to our state in the past three years; the state unemployment rate is the lowest it's been in five years; our "rainy day fund" has grown by 518 percent over the past three years; and Georgia is one of only 10 states that still maintains a AAA bond rating from all three major agencies. The federal government doesn't even have that distinction.

Although Georgia still faces its share of challenges, the Governor's proposed budgets for FY 2014 Amended and FY 2015 provide a positive outlook towards the future.

Gov. Deal has proposed a budget increase from \$19.9 billion in FY 2014 to \$20.8 billion in FY 2015, including a large funding increase for K-12 and Higher Education initiatives.

This is great news for Georgia schools, as this \$547 million increase will allow local school districts to restore instructional days, end teacher furloughs and increase teacher salaries. I look forward to sharing a closer and more in-depth look at Gov. Deal's budget proposals and Georgia's economic outlook in my next column.

Senate committees have already started meeting to review bills moving through the legislative process, and I am grateful for the opportunity to continue serving as chair of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Georgia's transportation infrastructure not only needs

to be reliable, but it needs to be safe. This committee's biggest task moving forward will be exploring ways to increase transportation funding without additional taxpayer burdens.

Sen. Steve Gooch represents the 51st Senate District which includes Dawson, Fannin, Gilmer, Lumpkin, Union and White counties and portions of Forsyth and Pickens counties. He may be reached at (404) 656-9221 or via email at gooch@senate.ga.gov