

Sports

See the Sports Section at ngame.com

Burks, Rich power Union in come-from-behind victory at Murphy Panthers clinch spot in State Tournament for third straight season

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Murphy, NC - Trailing 5-4 in its final at bat, Union County (10-3, 7-2) rallied for three runs in the seventh inning to take a 7-5 victory at Murphy, NC.

Senior Jackson Burks owned the Bulldogs' pitching staff - driving in three runs during a 4-for-4 performance that included a pair of doubles and a seventh inning, RBI triple that scored the go-ahead run.

Junior Lance Rich also drove in three runs while going 2-for-4 with a double.

Josh Daniel got the start on the mound and went 3 2/3 innings, allowing 7 walks and 3 hits in a no-decision.

Senior Hunter Hughes worked the final 3 1/3 innings,

fanning three, walking one, and allowing one hit while recording the win.

The Bulldogs got on the board with a run in the bottom half of the first inning after the Panthers left two runners in scoring position during their half of the inning.

A leadoff walk, a sacrifice bunt, and a two-out, RBI single gave Murphy a 1-0 advantage.

A leadoff double from freshman R.J. Banton was wasted in the second inning as Union was unable to bring him in.

Daniel worked around a pair of no-out walks in the bottom of the second and the junior right-hander was aided by the offense when the Panthers struck for four runs in the third.

Patrick Baggett, a freshman, started things off with a single to right field and Daniel followed with a base-hit to left. Hughes

loaded the bases with a bunt single, and with one out, Burks drove in two runs with a single to left field. Rich brought in two more runs with a double to left and Union took a 4-1 lead.

Murphy cut the lead to 4-3 in their half of the third after Daniel hit the leadoff batter and walked the next hitter. An infield single and a sacrifice fly scored a run, and later, an RBI double brought in the Bulldogs' second run of the inning.

Union would go scoreless in its next three plate appearances and Murphy took a 5-4 lead in the fourth.

Hughes entered the game with two outs in the fourth and rang up a Bulldog hitter looking at strike three to keep his team within one run.

Burks was stranded in the fifth after a one-out double to left.

In the sixth, Union went down 1-2-3, and Murphy did the same in their half of the inning.

In the seventh, Daniel led off with a double to center and with one-out, senior Jake Sisum doubled to left - bringing home Daniel and tying the game at 5-5.

Burks followed with a triple to center that scored Sisum and gave the Panthers a 6-5 advantage. Rich brought home Burks with a one-out single, making it a 7-5 game going into the bottom of the seventh.

Hughes allowed a single to left then hit a batter to put the tying run on base with nobody out.

He was able to induce a pop fly to left for the first out and sat down the next hitter with a swing-and-miss at strike three. With two outs, a fly ball to center ended the Murphy rally, and the game.

Daniel finished 2-for-4 at

the plate with a pair of runs. Hughes was also 2-for-4 while scoring once. Baggett was 2-for-3 with a run, Sisum went 1-for-3 with a run, an RBI, and a base-on-balls. Banton finished 1-for-4 with a double.

Junior outfielder Andrew Brown reached on a fielder's choice in the second inning and senior catcher Chase Barnett drew a leadoff walk in the fourth inning.

The second place Panthers were scheduled to host first place Rabun County on Monday, who currently own a one-game lead over Union due to Wildcats' victory over the Panthers back on March 24th. However, the game was rescheduled for this Wednesday at 5 p.m. due to rain.

On Friday, Union hosts Social Circle, who is in a third place tie with Oglethorpe County (6-3 in

Region 8-AA).

The Panthers have already guaranteed themselves a spot in the Class AA State Tournament but what position they enter the postseason is still up in the air.

Each of the four spots are still in play for Union County who can clinch no lower than a No. 2 seed if they knock off Rabun County (7-1 in Region 8-AA) and sweep Social Circle (6-3 in Region 8-AA). If the Panthers lose their remaining three games, they can finish no higher than third, which assures Union a road trip in the first round of the playoffs.

Friday's doubleheader with Social Circle will begin at 5 p.m.

Next Wednesday, Union will face rival Towns County at 5:30 p.m. in a makeup game from back in February. The contest will also be the Panthers' Senior Night.



Jake Sisum is second on the team with 13 RBIs to go along with a team-high 5 doubles. Photo/Todd Forrest



Jackson Burks is third on the squad with a .463 on base percentage and third with 6 base-on-balls. Photo/Todd Forrest



Lance Rich is third on the team with 9 runs scored. His .415 on base percentage is fourth. He's also batting .314. Photo/Todd Forrest

JV Baseball: Union County finishes third at JV Mountain League Tournament

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Cleveland - The Union County JV baseball season came to a close last weekend in White County after rain pushed the start of the Mountain League Tournament from Thursday to Saturday.

The Panthers received a first round bye on Thursday and were supposed to begin Friday afternoon but weather washed out the day's games and resulted in a doubleheader on Saturday to determine the League Champions.

**Panthers 7
Gilmer Co. 9 (8 innings)**

Union turned to its ace Candler Colwell in game one but unfortunately, ran into a red hot Bobcat lineup and allowed five runs during the first two innings.

Cole Davis entered in the third, giving up two runs over five innings of work.

The Union bats came in averaging almost 9 runs-per-game but were quiet for the first five innings as they fell into a 7-2 hole.

However, the bats came to life in the bottom of the sixth and cut the Gilmer lead to 7-4. Union tacked on three runs in the seventh, all coming with two outs, that knotted the game at 7-7.

In the top half of the eighth, Patrick Baggett took the mound and Gilmer tacked on two runs and then held the Panthers scoreless in the bottom half of the inning to take the game 9-7.

"Cole Davis had pitched really well, but he was getting up there in his pitch count on a hot day, and had just pitched out of a bases loaded jam with no outs, due to two great plays from Slade Rowan in the outfield," said Union County JUV Head Coach Corey Garrett. "Patrick Baggett took his spot on the mound and again, the Bobcats got



Freshman Patrick Baggett is one of UC's most versatile players in the field. He's seen action at shortstop, pitcher, and outfield Photo/Todd Forrest

hot, scoring two huge runs to take a two-run lead that we never came back from."

**Panthers 14
Pickens Co. 0**

After suffering a tough loss to Gilmer, Coach Garrett's squad took out their frustrations on Pickens County in the third place game.

Josh Nachtrieb struck out the side in the first inning as he cruised up to a two-hitter over five innings before the game was called due to the mercy rule.

Union got three runs in the

first inning, four in the second, three in the third, and four in the fourth.

"We really wanted to get into the championship against our rivals from Dawson County, but we just got a late start and it bit us," Coach Garrett said. "However, I was proud of the team for righting some wrongs in the third place game and not getting down on themselves and getting the win. Nonetheless, this team had a great season and with this group of young men coming up, Union County baseball is going to be in great hands for quite a few years to come."

Soccer: 8-AA Championship, Senior Night, Pink Out all this Friday night

On Friday, Union County soccer will host Oglethorpe County for Senior Night.

The night is of extra importance to the Lady Panthers as the 8-AA Region Championship is on the line between Union and the Lady Patriots.

Meanwhile, the sixth ranked Union County men are only two wins away from an 8-AA crown. A win over the Patriots and the Panthers will visit fifth ranked Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville on Apr. 20th with the men's Region

8-AA Championship up for grabs.

This Friday's games will also be a 'Pink Out' as all Union County fans are encouraged to wear pink. The Lady Panthers get underway at 5:30 p.m. with the guys to follow.

On Tuesday, Apr. 14th, Union County will visit Towns County where both teams are looking to avenge the only blemish on their 2015 season records.

Bowling scores

Monday Night Ladies: Pam Bierce 200, Joyce Trenton, Ines Bergstrom 184. Monday Night Men: Dewey Allen 200, 216, Bill Smith 205, 203, Chris Roberts 234, 203, 200, Kevin Mohan 210, Joe Teague 244, Derick Rice 258, 231, 259, 748 Series, Tom Griffiths 215, Chris Ellinwood 214, Jay Burrell 225, Brett Hogsed 201, 220, Dustin Ford 213, Ron Wingate 212, Rick Bracjen 241, Gary Brown 227, Dave Davis 225, 248, Kirk Bass 219, John Stevens 258, 257, Ray Everett 216, Jeb Plott 256, 216, 216, Jim McCreary 227, 247, Hazel Farmer Seniors: Ron Gaucher 205, Del Neiffer 210, 200, Bob Shannon 193. Thursday Night Fun Mixed: Taz Matetzschk 209, 215, Tim McVay 234, Kirk Bass 213, John Moore 255, Zach Moore 222, 247, 238, Tim Moore 222, 247, 238, Chuck Reeves 204, Daniel Brown 210, Johnathan Everett 222, 222, Ray Everett 216, 257, 218, Bonnell Thomas 205, Bill Smith 221, Stanley Tyler 223, 228, Mike Pope 223, Jordan Moore 221, 201, Doug Roberts 214, Mike Davis 203, 204, Jim McCreary 216, 214, Jaythan Burrell 204.

NASCAR 2015

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Johnson holds off Harvick at Texas

FT. WORTH, Tex.—Six-time NASCAR Sprint Cup champion Jimmy Johnson passed Kevin Harvick for the lead on lap 322 of Saturday night's 334-lap Texas Cup race, then held on for his fifth series win at the track.

"Yeah, I think that the end of the race was nutty," said Johnson. "I think those last three restarts with the varying tire strategies that were going on; everybody was just driving so hard. Our car didn't handle like it was when we were up front leading, so the first restart we were pretty concerned and made some changes. The second one we got a little better. The third one, our car was really, really good and able to work our way forward."

Kevin Harvick took the lead early in the race from his teammate and polesitter Kurt Busch, but relinquished it several times to Johnson, who led 128 laps.

There were three late race cautions. Jamie McMurray, who did not pit for tires, was the leader on the first one, but Harvick quickly got by him. Harvick was the leader on the second and third restarts and pulled away for a considerable lead.

Johnson was third on lap 318, behind his teammate Dale Earnhardt Jr. Three laps later, Earnhardt got a run on both Earnhardt and Harvick going into turn-1, passing both of them, to become the new leader.

With Johnson out front the real battle was between Harvick and Earnhardt. Harvick's car bobbed a couple times and Junior was able to get by him briefly. But as the cars approached the finish line, Harvick made a crossover move to grab second.

"I just got behind there, and Jimmie was fast for those last couple laps and got around us," said Harvick, who also finished second at Texas in November 2014. "I got loose coming off four and I got in the wall and just was trying to hang on to where I needed to be."

While Earnhardt had a fast car, he did not lead any laps.

"I had the car I anticipated I would have," he said. "So many pit stops, so many-- a lot of great stops, a lot of good stops that maintained track position. Pit road was pretty cut and dried. We come down, get four tires, there was some opportunities for us to stay out or get two, and you never really fool with that, it's good to be on offense with good rubber under the car all the time. We made some good adjustments. We seemed to have a good pattern of what was working for us and came up short at the end of the race."

Joey Logano was fourth. Brad Keselowski finished fifth. He received a commitment line violation on lap 268, after he attempted to pit and hit the pit road cone. He had led 27 laps, but was sent to the rear of the field, and had to work his way back to the front.

Jamie McMurray was sixth, followed by Jeff Gordon, Kasey Kahne, Martin Truex, and Carl



Jimmy Johnson Celebrates His Fifth Texas Cup Win

Edwards.

Polesitter Kurt Busch led 45 laps during the early stages of the race, lost the handling on his car and finished 14th.

Top-16 Chase contenders: 1. Harvick-306, 2. Johnson-280, 3. Truex-266, 4. Keselowski-246, 5. Kahne-230, 6. Johnson-216, 7. Earnheart-213, 8. Hamlin-205, 9. Almirola-195, 10. Ragan-194, 11. McMurray-193, 12. Kenseth-189, 13. Gordon-186, 14. Edwards-182, 15. Mears-128, 16. Menard-129.

ERIK JONES GETS FIRST INFINITY RACE

Michigan's 18-year-old Erik Jones outraced several big name Cup stars on the way to winning the Xfinity Series race at Texas, in his first ninth series start.

Jones outran Sprint Cup stars Brad Keselowski and Dale Earnhardt Jr. on a restart with 25 laps remaining Friday night, to win by nearly two seconds.

The four-time winner in the Truck Series, where Jones races full time, beat Keselowski on the restart after an earlier battle with Earnhardt. Jones even bumped Keselowski from behind, before a crash brought out the caution flag.

"I don't know what to say right now. It's surreal," Jones said. "We beat Cup guys tonight. That's huge for us."

Jones told reporters after the race that he was frustrated with Earnhardt as he tried to get around him late in the race, figuring the veteran was trying to teach him a little patience.

"I hope he had fun," Jones said. "I knew we had a blast. Just racing hard with those guys. They've been doing it so long. They know exactly what they're doing. I'm just trying to figure it out."

Keselowski was second, followed by Earnhardt, Regan Smith, Austin Dillon, Darrell Wallace Jr., Denny Hamlin, Chase Elliott, Chris Buescher, and Brian Scott.

Top-10 leaders after 6 of 32: 1. T. Dillon-219, 2. C. Buescher-217, 3. Elliott-208, 4. Wallace-204, 5. Reed-197, 6. Smith-197, 7. Sadler-181, 8. Gaughan-176, 9. Scott-169, 10. Suarez-160.

KYLE BUSCH STILL RESTING AT HOME

Kyle Busch continues to rest comfortably in his home in

Charlotte, North Carolina before rehabilitating from a compound fracture of the right lower leg and left mid-foot fracture, both injuries resulted from an accident during the February 21 Xfinity Series race at Daytona.

No specific timetable has announced for Busch's return to the track; however interim drivers have been confirmed to pilot the No. 54 Monster Energy Toyota in the Xfinity Series.

Busch's teammate Denny Hamlin drove for him in several prior races. will return April 18 at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway and May 23 at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway.

Hamlin is currently running a full season in the Cup Series for Joe Gibbs Racing in the No. 11 Toyota and was previously confirmed to run in six Xfinity Series events this season in support of other team sponsors. This brings Hamlin's 2015 Xfinity Series schedule now to 11 events.

In addition, JGR announces that team member Erik Jones will again drive the No. 54 April 24 at Richmond (Va.) International Raceway, for a total of three race events supporting the No. 54 team.

David Ragan will continue to fill in for Kyle Busch behind the wheel of the No. 18 Sprint Cup Toyota. Ragan's current race team Front Row Motorsports and sponsor CSX accommodated the move by Ragan and Ragan is expected to return to the team later this season.

Ragan has run eight full seasons in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series with 291 career starts. The 29-year-old Georgia native has two career wins, including most recently at Talladega Superspeedway in May of 2013.

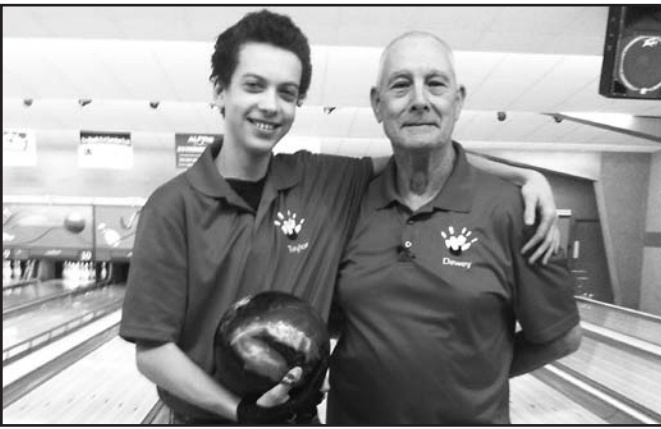
Weekend Racing: The Cup and Xfinity teams are at Bristol's bull-rin for the first of two races at the .54-mile high banked, oval. The Trucks do not race again until May 8.

Sat. Apr. 18; Xfinity Series race 7 of 32; Starting time: 1:30 pm ET; TV: FoxSports1.

Sun., Apr. 19; Sprint Cup race 8 of 36; Starting time: 1 pm ET; TV: FOX.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at: www.hodges@race500.com.

Georgia Youth Leadership Tournament winner



Taylor Karisny with coach Dewey Allen

Taylor Karisny rolled over the competition on March 22nd in the Georgia Youth Leadership Tournament held in Lawrenceville, GA. Taylor and Savannah Karisny along with Donovan Anguelo participated. There were over 90 participants in four divisions. Taylor beat his

opponents consecutively by 31 then 90 pins in match play. Taylor's high game was a 247. He beat the 1st place entrant by 41 pins to win the title.

His coach, Dewey Allen, said that he has shown tremendous progress in his first year of competitive bowling.