

Sports

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Softball: Union concludes Summer League play; come together as a family

Scrimmage vs White on Aug. 7th; season opens Aug. 9th at Lanier Point Tourney

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Dahlonega - The Union County Lady Panthers wrapped up Summer League action with one win, two losses, and a tie.

Union County traveled to Dahlonega for the North Georgia Summer Classic and got off to a good start on Monday, knocking off the defending 8-AAA Region Champions Jackson County, 4-3. Jackson also reached the Elite 8 and finished fourth in Class AAA.

In the second game, the Lady Panthers faced a juggernaut from Class AAAAAA, the Alcovy Lady Tigers.

Alcovy, the defending Region 2-AAAAAA Champions, coming off a 28-win season, pulled away late during a 5-0 win over Union.

Tuesday's action began with a 3-1 loss to the Region 8-AAAA Region Runner Up Walnut Grove.

The Lady Warriors won 20 games last season despite facing a brutal schedule.

In the final game, Union County tied Region 8-AAAAA's Winder-Barrow 3-3. Winder was a .500 team last season and were eliminated by Apalachee in the Region Semi-Finals.

Once again, Union returned to the right arms of junior Crystal Busbee and freshman Laken Chambers to keep the opposition in check.

And for the most part, the duo was successful.

Other than a two-run, two-out triple off Crystal Busbee in Alcovy's last at bat, the pitching staff kept the Lady Panther bats within striking distance.

"I am more confident



The Union County Lady Panthers went zip-lining in Helen for one of the events of the Panther Pride Camp. The team also visited Helton Creek Falls, went bowling, and camped out in hopes of bringing the teammates closer together.

in my pitching now," Union Coach Jessica Stewart said. "We only have two pitchers this year and both of them had a good summer. I think we can be very effective with Chambers and Busbee. They should be able to keep us competitive in every game."

In the opener against Jackson County, Chambers settled down after a tough first inning, to go 2-for-3 at the plate, scoring twice and driving in another off a first inning, two-out triple.

The freshman walked three and surrendered seven hits. Jackson would strike for two in the first and another in the third, but Union never trailed and held on for the 4-3 win.

Crystal Busbee finished

2-for-2 with a run, a double, and a walk. Courtney Busbee was 1-for-1 with a first inning RBI and a sacrifice bunt.

Hallye King had a nice day at the plate, going 2-for-2 with a single, double, while scoring Union's fourth and deciding run.

Freshman Maddie Horinek also had a strong showing at the plate. The right fielder went 2-for-2 with a pair of singles. Although none were bigger than her two-out RBI single that scored King.

Kelsie Nix picked up an RBI on a grounder to short, Karley Nix and Madison Rich each laid down a sacrifice bunt, while Maddie Garrett drew a walk.

In the loss to Alcovy, Crystal Busbee kept the Lady

Tigers in check, allowing three runs with one being unearned. In their final at bat, Alcovy rattled off three-straight hits after the first two hitters were retired. The third hit, however, was the dagger. A two-run triple that turned a 3-0 game into a 5-0 game, and out-of-reach for the Lady Panthers.

Crystal Busbee struck out four and allowed only one walk. She gave up six hits with half of them coming with the opposition down to it's final out.

At the plate, Union left runners stranded, a leadoff walk in the second and third innings.

Where the Lady Panthers really missed their opportunity was in the fifth inning.

With one-out, Garrett,



Senior Allie Stroman



Senior Madison Rich

King, and Courtney Busbee strung together three straight singles.

Unfortunately, a pop up and a ground-out ended Union's scoring chances.

As the regular season draws near, Coach Stewart likes what she has seen from her Lady Panther squad. The focus this summer was to not only improve their skill-set, but to improve team chemistry. The team has taken part in hiking and camping trips, zip-lining, and other activities to bring the squad closer together and build a stronger bond between teammates.

"We did a Panther Pride team camp this year where we took the team bowling, zip lining, hiking and we practiced and played a couple days," Coach Stewart said. "It was awesome for the girls to get to experience things together as a team and bond in many ways than just on the softball field. It really helps the new teammates fit in and come together as a family. I really appreciate the Lady Diamond Club for helping us make that happen for the team."

As for the product that Union County High School will put on the field in August, the Summer League provides an opportunity to put the team in scenarios that can't be simulated anywhere else.

"After all the summer league games, I have a much better understanding of where we are as a team and what we need to continue to work on," Coach Stewart said. "I got a chance to see most of these girls in game-like situations and how they react which is something that I don't get to always see in practice."

One unique aspect about

the 2014 squad will be the lack of seniors on the roster. Union County softball will have one of its smallest senior classes in school history, but Coach Stewart isn't using that as an excuse.

"I wasn't sure exactly how well we would do with only having six upperclassmen, so I knew some of these younger girls would have to step in and fill roles," Coach Stewart said. "I think there are a couple that will step right in and be an immediate help to our varsity squad. Three of the six upperclassmen didn't play much varsity last year at all. We only have four returning starters, but thankfully the rest of the girls are ready to go. Summer is extremely important to our program. The summer gives me some time to develop these girls and get them where they need to be for high school ball."

Despite the youth, Union County doesn't ever have to rebuild. Coach Stewart is confident that this team can reach its fourth consecutive Region 8-AA Championship Game.

"You can expect them to play and have the same goals as we do every season," Coach Stewart said. "We want to play for a Region Championship and make it to Columbus. This group, starting with Rich and (Allie) Stroman have a great work ethic. They do not go through the motions. They come out to practice and want to be there and want to get better. Most of the time I have to run this group off the field because they're wanting 'one more' ground ball or 'one more' pitch to hit."

Much of the credit for the pipeline of gifted and more importantly, hard working athletes that Coach Stewart has had at her disposal, belongs to the feeder programs.

"We will be young and we will certainly make some mistakes, but if you're running your middle school, travel, rec league, and junior varsity teams right, then there shouldn't be much rebuilding to do," Coach Stewart said. "I'm very blessed with the softball talent that I have been given. My J.V. practices right along with my varsity. They take the same amount of cuts and ground balls and work just as hard. They are ready to step in their position as soon as that senior graduates. They know their role on J.V. and they know they will get the opportunity to move to the next level."

The Lady Panthers will be hosting their annual 100 Inning Game on Saturday beginning at 10 a.m. at the UCHS Softball Complex. Everyone is invited to attend.

Football: Conditioning begins, official practice opens Aug. 5th, kickoff less than a month away



Union County began its conditioning for the 2013 season. The team will travel to Camp Jabez on Wednesday and return Friday. The first official practice will be on Aug. 5th. The Panthers will then host White County in a scrimmage on Aug. 22nd. Photos/Todd Forrest

MUSA registration

Mountain United Soccer Association is ready for Fall Soccer.

Registrations are currently being accepted for ages 4-18. Forms have been mailed to players who have participated in previous seasons.

Forms are also available by visiting the league's website: www.mountainssoccer.org. The deadline for registration is Aug. 7th.

In Blairsville, CottBeverage is our community host for the soccer fields. In Hiwassee, the fields at the Towns County Fairgrounds are utilized through the cooperation of the local recreation department. The league is grateful for their commitment and support.

The fall season will begin in early September. Anyone who is interested in playing needs to register promptly. In some cases space is limited.

MUSA is a volunteer run organization and is also a 501C3



nonprofit. Any and all donations are directed to the youth player. Field Sponsors, Sign Sponsors and Team Sponsors are always needed.

If you are interested in supporting the youth soccer players in our community through sponsorship and/or donation, please contact the association.

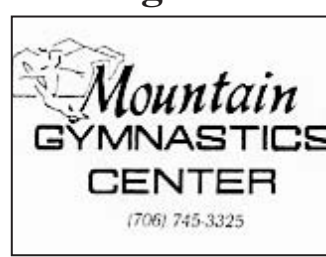
For additional information contact the league at 706-994-4351, musa.soccer@gmail.com, or visit us on the web at www.mountainssoccer.org.

Mountain Gymnastics registration

Fall Registration for Gymnastics, Preschool, and Tumbling Classes has begun.

Classes begun the week of Aug. 5th. Stop by the gym to sign up for a class.

See our schedule at www.mtngym.com or call (706)745-3325.



2013 UCHS Softball schedule

- Aug. 7th: vs White Co. (Scrimmage) 5 p.m.
- Aug. 9-10th: @ Lanier Tournament TBA
- Aug. 12th: vs Fannin County 6 p.m.
- Aug. 13th: vs North Murray 5 p.m.
- Aug. 19th: @ North Murray 5 p.m.
- Aug. 22nd: @ Rabun County 6 p.m.
- Aug. 23rd: vs Walnut Grove (@ North Georgia) 5 p.m.
- Aug. 24th: @ Oglethorpe County (DH) 1 p.m.
- Aug. 27th: vs Jefferson 5 p.m.
- Aug. 28th: @ Fannin County
- Aug. 31st: vs Greene County (DH) 12 p.m.
- Sept. 5th: vs Rabun County 6 p.m.
- Sept. 6-7th: @ Oconee County Tournament TBA
- Sept. 10th: @ Social Circle (DH) 4 p.m.
- Sept. 11th: @ White County 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 12th: @ Jefferson 6:45 p.m.
- Sept. 16th: @ East Hall 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 19th: vs Washington-Wilkes (DH) 4 p.m.
- Sept. 24th: 1st Round of Region Tournament TBA
- Sept. 28-30th: 2nd Round of Region Tournament TBA
- Oct. 5th: Region Championship TBA

2013 UCHS Football schedule

- Aug. 22nd vs White County (Scrimmage) TBA
- Aug. 30th vs Towns County 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 6th @ Fannin County 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 13th @ Andrews N.C. 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 20th BYE WEEK
- Sept. 27th @ Washington-Wilkes 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 4th vs Oglethorpe County
- Oct. 11th @ Riverside Military Academy 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 18th vs Greene County 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 25th vs Rabun County 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 1st @ Social Circle 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 8th vs Jefferson 7:30 p.m.