

# Union's Cheerleaders and Football players honored at Sports Banquet

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More than 175 players, cheerleaders, coaches, and families were in attendance as the Union County High School football team and Cheerleaders held their banquet on Thursday at Liberty Baptist Church.

A steak dinner was held at 6 p.m. before the Cheerleading squad said goodbye to four seniors and the football team and Union County Quarterback Club honored 13 seniors.

Liberty Pastor and Quarterback Club Vice President Gary Rogers volunteered the church for this event and opened the dinner with a blessing, before everyone dug into a hearty steak dinner prepared by Keith and Karen Herbert, Bob Overstreet, Ronnie Benfield, Richard Hougrand, Steve and Carla Drake, Rob Dobbins and Rehnee Herr. The 8,000 square foot banquet room was decorated by Deana Thomas, Robin Burnette, and Rehnee Herr.

Union County Quarterback Club President Tsali Bentley opened the event by welcoming everyone in attendance and thanking those who played a vital role during the season and setting up the banquet. Bentley then handed the floor over to Union County Cheerleading coaches Elizabeth Plott and Margaret Stuart.

"We had a good team and a young team," Coach Plott said. "Although, we are losing four seniors that have given a lot to the team."

Coach Plott handed out Participation Awards to each of the Union County Cheerleaders. The 2012 Cheerleading squad consisted of four seniors, three juniors, seven sophomores, and eight freshman.

Coach Plott then handed out the awards that were voted on by the cheerleaders. The first of the Position Awards went to junior Emily Arrant for **Best Base**.

The **Best Back Spot** award was given to junior Anborah Collins. The award for **Best Flier** was given to freshman Emmeline Stuart. Freshman Rachel Anderson picked up the award for **Most Improved**.

Senior Chelsi George was awarded **Most Spirited**. The award for **Best All-Around** was presented to senior Captain Cassie Davis. The **Academic Award** went to senior Co-captain Mikala Jones. And last but not least, The **Coaches Award** was given to Chalonda Strickland.

Then is a surprising twist to Coach Plott and Coach Stuart, Davis stepped forward and announced that they had gifts for the coaches as well.

"Coach Stuart coached a lot of us during our first season and was our Forward Roll Coach during competition," Davis said. "She has the best back flips that I've ever seen. My freshman year with her was awesome and it was a great way to come into the high school program."



UCHS senior football cheerleaders at banquet. Photo/Todd Forrest



UCHS senior football players at banquet. Photo/Todd Forrest

She then turned to Coach Plott.

"We went around the world with Ms. Plott," Davis said. "She was always there for us, gave me chocolate when I needed it and anytime that I needed anything, Ms. Plott was there. She is like my second mom and we just want to thank you."

Bentley and Rogers then opened the football awards by reflecting on the 2012 football season.

"From the Quarterback Club, congratulations on a winning season," Bentley said. "You put everything into what you do, and it showed by having a winning season, and as we all know, you can't take that for granted."

Bentley then recognized one of the senior players for starting a tradition of taking the team in front of the band after the games to celebrate a win with the Union County Fight Song.

"After one game, Craig Jones took the whole team over in front of the band," Bentley said. "That one gesture showed a bonding that can take place. I think that was huge this year and I want to thank you guys for knowing what relationships mean and building upon relationships."

The Quarterback Club Recognition Awards were presented to Joseph Mancuso, Brett Dobbins, Brett Dietz, Cody Davenport, and T Bentley for the **All-Academic Team**.

The next recognition was the **Community Service Award**, which was given to Mancuso, Dobbins, Kyle Oliver, and T Bentley.

"I'm a huge believer in community service," Tsali Bentley said. "I believe that the more you give of yourself the better the whole word is."

The club also recognized the *North Georgia News* for its coverage of high school and middle school football. Finally Bentley thanked the Quarter-

back Club Officers and Board Members for all of the hard work they have put in over the season.

"If it wasn't for them, we couldn't have gotten all of this done," Tsali Bentley said.

After the recognitions were presented, Union County Head Football Coach Brian Allison took center stage.

"I want to thank everyone for coming out," Coach Allison said. "This shows what a great program we have started and established over the years. I would like to thank God for the opportunity to work with such a great group of young men, Quarterback Club members, and parents."

Coach Allison went on to discuss what an outstanding group of parents he had during the season, and how they all supported the coaching staff through thick-and-thin.

"Throughout my career people always ask me, 'how bad are the parents?' But this year, I was either doing something right or they were afraid to come to me," Coach Allison said. "But there have been no issues, it was a pleasant season and I appreciate that."

"I want to thank the players for putting up with me and a very special group of coaches and their families," Allison continued. "There isn't a coaching staff anywhere that I would rather have my own kids play for than the guys that I work with."

Coach Allison thanked Coach John Duncan for volunteering his time to work in the weight room and at practice.

Allison also thanked Travis Swartz, Brett Chatham, Paul McBride, Steve Morlock, Richard Rivera, Dr. Allan Lee, the Quarterback Club, Bob Overstreet, Keith and Karen Herbert, Mandy Hunter, the administration, faculty, and staff of Union County High School, Coach Plott, the Cheerleaders, *The*



Coach Allison speaks before handing out awards.

*North Georgia News*, bus drivers David Chatham and Kevin Garrett, Robbie Brown, Johnny McCoy, all the businesses who supported the program, the ball boys, and everyone who set up the concession stands.

"Thanks to all of you, you've done a marvelous job," Coach Allison said. "Hopefully I haven't left anyone out and if I did, I apologize."

Coach Allison then presented the Participation Awards to each of the more than 50 players and managers on the Panther roster. But before he handed them out, he took a moment to reflect back on the 2012 season.

"I was sitting at home on the Friday after the season ended and couldn't watch any of the games because I felt like we should have still been playing," Allison said. "It's kind of bitter-sweet. We went 6-4 but we felt like we should have been 8-2. If you had told us before the season that we would win six games, we wouldn't have been completely satisfied but would've been fairly happy so I try to remind myself of that. It was a good season, just not as satisfying as it could've been."

At that point of the banquet, each member of the coaching staff presented the Position Awards.

Offensive Coordinator, Howard McCombs handed out three Offensive Awards: the **Special Teams Award** went to senior kicker Eric Hougrand.

"He's the hardest working kicker that I've ever been around," Coach McCombs said. "He did a phenomenal job."

The **Offensive Back Award** was presented to senior Jonathan Hughes.

"I'm honored to give this award to this young man," Coach McCombs said. "After his freshman and sophomore year, I could have never dreamed that he would become the person or player that he ended up being for us."

Senior quarterback T Bentley was given the **Offensive Coaches Award**.

"There's only one position on the field that catches as much heat as the coaches do, and that's the quarterback," McCombs said. "This man has stepped up and the strides that he has made over the past four years, while taking the heat, has been phenomenal."

Next up was Coach Cul-



Cheerleading coaches Margaret Stuart (L) and Elizabeth Plott (R)

len Robertson to hand the **Wide Receiver Award** to senior Lalo Rivera.

"He did the important things that nobody really talks about," Coach Robertson said. "His blocking down field is something that I take pride in and is something that nobody really sees."

Offensive Line Coach Neil Setzer took front-and-center to present the **Offensive Line Award** to senior CJ Byers.

"Playing the O-line takes somebody with courage, dedication, it takes young men with a lot of heart, who will fight through injuries and CJ personified that."

Defensive Line Coach Gary Butler had two awards to present. The first award was given to Craig Jones with the **Defensive Line Coaches Award**.

The **Defensive Line Award** was presented to junior Luther Jones.

"The numbers those two put up were incredible," Coach Butler said. "As a defensive line coach it's not often that you get to brag about your players like this."

Linebacker Coach Justin Byers gave the **Linebacker Award** to Sophomore Chase Barnett.

"It takes a very tough breed and a smart player to play linebacker. I have watched Chase and Matthew (Spiwak) grow up. It's just a great experience to be with these guys, and I want to thank them for letting me be a part of their life."

Secondary Coach Robby Roxbury handed out the **Defensive Back Award**. But before

he did, he asked each member of the Union County secondary to step forward.

"Only one of them is getting an award but they all played as one." Coach Roxbury said. "They had to rely on each other and in my opinion, to be a good defensive back, you need a short memory. These guys fit the bill. Individually and as a whole."

After speaking about the complexity of the coverage schemes and giving some statistics, the award was given to senior Josh Kim.

Afterwards, Coach Allison would hand out the Highest **G.P.A. Award** to T Bentley.

"I can promise that you have to be smart to work with Coach McCombs," Coach Allison joked.

The **Up and Coming Award** was given to Mancuso.

"We expect some great things from him," Coach Allison said. "He had to play the final quarter-and-a-half at Jefferson when T hurt his shoulder."

The **Iron Horse Award** was presented to Clay "Chipper" Burnette.

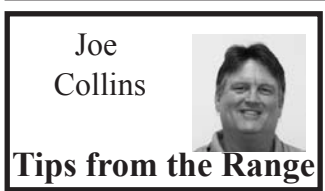
"This award is for the person who played with the most pain throughout the season and it was a difficult decision this year," Allison said. "He played with a torn labrum the entire season. He hurt his ankle, he hurt his thumb, there is a whole list of injuries but he always told me, 'don't worry coach, I will be there' and he always was."

The **Captains Award** also went to Burnette and Luther Jones.

This award was voted on by the team and to me, this is the purest award that you can receive," Coach Allison said.

Coach Allison also spoke about what this 2012 season means to him and how he will always hold this Senior Class in high esteem.

"I'll never forget how far these guys came," he said. "From the scrimmage at White County, which didn't look too good, to our shutout of Social Circle (on Senior Night). The way they grew over three or four months is amazing to me. As a coach of 17 years, I've got about three or four senior classes that were really special, and this class is one of them."



Joe Collins

## Tips from the Range

There is a split second of action that determines how your shot will turn out and that action is at the very top of the swing when the arms start their initial move down. This is the primary area that will allow the club to start on the proper path back to the ball, and if it isn't smooth and solid, the club head will be wrong at impact. It is vital that you allow the club to "fall" out of the top. Don't influence the initial drop with the hands in any way or you will create a bad path for the arms to follow. This is the most consistent flaw I see in amateurs and many don't even realize they are doing it. The top has to be correct to produce good shots consistently.

When we talk about the action we have out of the top of our swing, the one word that should come to mind is smooth. If you look at the great Tom Watson's swing you will notice that he starts his downswing before the arms finish their arc to the top. In other words, his weight transfer is headed toward his left side before the completion of the backswing. This movement makes his downswing very smooth because it allows his lower body to start the move to impact. Remember, this move to the front foot leads the weight transfer on the downswing and that is the key to swinging smoothly.

There are two major reasons why the "move from the top" can get fouled up and the first is **BALANCE!**

How many times have we talked about balance as a key to the proper swing? If the core of the swing tilts, then the club will follow a very negative path and you will not like the outcome. Typically it will be a pull. You need to feel as though you are leaning away and behind the ball at impact and that will guarantee your arms extend. This will also allow your lower body to begin the downswing.

You must not do anything with your hands as the club starts its path to impact. If you are out of balance at the top, then you will need to cast your hands first to help reestablish your center of gravity on the downswing. This early release of the hands will also make you open your shoulders to soon, so make sure you are in a good balanced position throughout the whole of your stance and swing.

There is an interesting point that I would like to emphasize while talking about balance and the start of your downswing. Your arms weigh approximately

ten pounds each. When you start your backswing, you will be swinging twenty pounds of active weight in motion to the top and then returning it to impact. That alone will pull you to your toes during the swing, and once you are on your toes, you will have to re-adjust your balance and WHAM, that rocking of the weight has made you swing bad out of the top and your shot is over, start cussing cause most likely, "it ain't gonna be pretty." You must stay in balance throughout the whole of the swing and not just at address. Most often times when you see a tour pro hit a shot offline, it was because his/her balance was bad. It is one of the biggest things they work on when looking at fundamental issues.

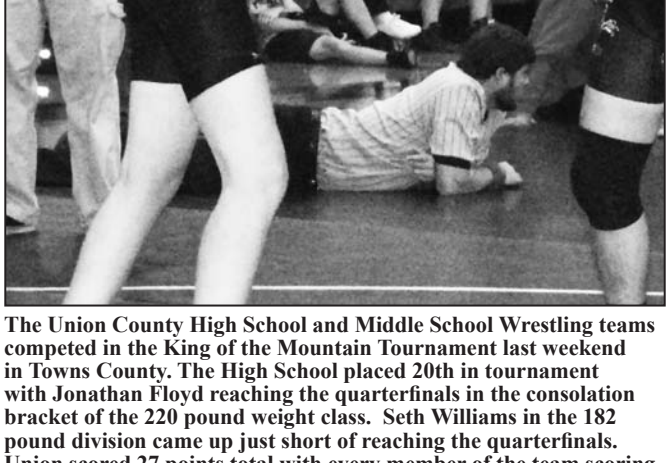
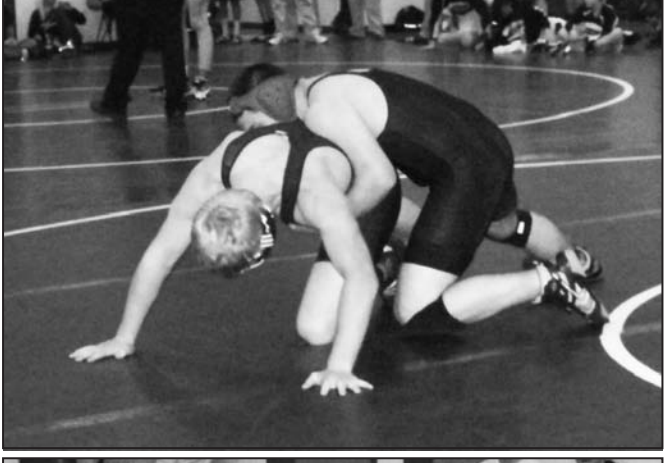
The second most popular error that affects the start of the downswing is the need to "hit" the ball instead of trusting the swing to do the work for us. This overwhelming desire to hit it hard is a good attribute but it has its place and time during the swing. It is natural for us to try and manipulate the speed of the club with our smaller muscles like those found in the hands and wrist because it feels better. The actual nerve endings are closer to the surface of our skin in those areas and give us direct feedback much quicker than the feelings we get from the bigger muscles. But, it is the larger muscle group that we must engage to achieve the best results and greatest distance. I have always said that with proper accuracy will come proper distance. The two go hand in hand when swinging correctly. This is why the pros can hit those long drives into really narrow fairways.

To avoid this error, you must simply be in balance and let the body swing the club. Keep your grip pressure firm but don't squeeze the grip and allow the big muscles to control the action. Your hands and arms are along for the ride until just before impact when the lower hand can pour on the power. This will happen naturally if the weight transfer is correct and your head is behind impact. The great Ben Hogan said, "I hit the ball as hard as I can with my right hand but this action must wait until the club has left the top."

Focus on how the club leaves the top of the swing and you will begin to see that the club will work for you and not against you. Clubs are designed to be swung hard, but do it in the correct sequence: Upper body first on the backswing and lower body first on the downswing. Let the hands play catch-up on the downswing and watch your shots improve.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

# UC Wrestling attends King of the Mountain



The Union County High School and Middle School Wrestling teams competed in the King of the Mountain Tournament last weekend in Towns County. The High School placed 20th in tournament with Jonathan Floyd reaching the quarterfinals in the consolation bracket of the 220 pound weight class. Seth Williams in the 182 pound division came up just short of reaching the quarterfinals. Union scored 27 points total with every member of the team scoring a point and winning at least one match. Photos by Joe Collins.