

# Sports

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## UCHS hosts meet-and-greet with new head volleyball coach

By Todd Forrest  
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Union County High School introduced Anna Chapman as its third head volleyball coach during an outdoor, on-campus meeting with players and parents on Monday, June 8.

"I've heard great things about the team, [for example] their companionship and character," Chapman said after gathering with the players for the first time at the June 8 introduction. "I think it's going to be a really good building year and I'm excited to see where they are at with their skills."

Chapman takes over for Megan Swanson, who led Union County to consecutive state tournaments, including an Elite 8 appearance in 2019, during her two seasons at the helm. The Union County Board of Education accepted Swanson's resignation in May, Superintendent John Hill said.

With expectations surrounding the fifth-year program at an all-time high, Chapman is tasked with replacing five seniors, including three all-region selections in Kait McCarter, Adelia Pyle and Izzy Zamora, off last year's Region 8-AA runner-up. Fortunately for the first-year coach, the Lady Panthers return a wealth of experience from the underclassmen ranks, most notably rising-juniors



UCHS athletic director Banks Bitterman (L) looks on as new volleyball coach Anna Chapman (R) meets the players and parents for the very first time during last week's introduction at the Union County Middle School pavillion. Photo/Todd Forrest

Riley Allison and Morgan Fussell.

Allison, an all-region performer in 2019, was second on the team with 57 kills (Pyle 112), while Fussell's 23 blocks were second-most (McCarter 42) and her 50 kills ranked third.

Along with Allison and Fussell, Union County expects to bring back 10 players that saw significant varsity action in 2019.

Following the introduction, Chapman and outgoing Union County athletic director Banks Bitterman unveiled a summer workout schedule for the volleyball program that adheres to the Georgia High School Association's current guidelines.

According to Chapman, the team will meet twice-a-week for conditioning at Meeks Park and will continue following that course through

the GHSA-mandated July 4 dead week. Chapman and Bitterman remain cautiously optimistic the restrictions could be lifted on Monday, July 6, allowing the workouts to move into the gymnasium. Still, with the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, they remain leery of speculation.

Last week's introductory meeting was for returning players only, but if any incoming freshmen are considering

volleyball, Chapman urges them to reach out by email at achapman@ucschools.org.

"We're limited to [20 kids per workout] because of COVID, so if we have a lot of ninth-graders interested, then we'll need to set some more conditioning dates," she said.

When asked what fans and parents can expect to see in year-one from an Anna Chapman-coached volleyball squad, she answered with one

word: Enthusiasm.

"I think we're going to have a lot of fun. Overall, I'm a pretty positive person, so I believe the enthusiasm that we show on and off the court is what we'll be known for."

Chapman is a native of Columbus and a graduate of Columbus High (2006) and the University of North Georgia (2010), where she majored in Math and Science Education. She also owns a master's degree in the same field from West Governors University.

Before coming to Union County in 2019, Chapman's coaching resume included stops at Lumpkin County, Berkmar High School as well as Nashville, Tennessee.

Chapman, who begins her second year teaching at Union County Middle School and 11th overall, is married to UCHS alum Ben Chapman. They have two daughters, Betty (3) and Dot (1).



Anna Chapman

## Panthers begin limited workouts with football season two months away

By Todd Forrest  
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Panthers football and head coach Brian Allison were back on the field last week for the first time since ending a historic 2019 campaign that saw Union County record the first playoff victory in program history.

However, anyone expecting a typical practice filled with the sound of pads and whistles will be extremely disappointed.

The Georgia High School Association has applied stringent safety measures to summer workouts in an attempt to curb the spread of COVID-19.

For starters, training sessions are closed to all visitors and the use of pads, helmets and footballs is strictly off-limits. Only 20 players are allowed at practice, each undergoing a temperature check at the outset, and must maintain six feet of social distancing at all times. As of this writing, Allison has divided the team into three separate groups that all work out at different times and locales.

Despite the hurdles, Coach Allison and his players were anxious to get back to work following three months of piggskin-free quarantine.

"These kids have been super and their attitudes have been great," Allison told the



Union County head coach Brian Allison (L) and assistant Greg Chambers (R) monitor the action during a workout session last week at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium. Allison told the *North Georgia News* that players will gradually work their way back into shape by "going 50%" in week one, then increasing to "70-75%" the following week and "80-85%" in week three. Photo/Todd Forrest

*North Georgia News*. "You could tell [they were happy to be back], their energy level was high all week long. They were excited to be back on the field and back around one another."

"Lots of things are going on in this world that are more important than football, but it's really good for us to

get back to some sense of normalcy."

Missing out on summer practices, camps and 7-on-7 tournaments could prove extra challenging, especially with Union County attempting to break in a new quarterback and receiving corp before August.

"That is a conversation that we've had among the

coaching staff because June is usually when we put in our passing game," Allison said.

"Last year, we wouldn't be quite as concerned, but this year we'll have three new receivers and a quarterback."

According to Allison, the quarterbacks and wideouts have trained privately, polishing their pass routes and tim-

ing, but even those workouts have seen limitations.

"The thing right now is, they can't use the school field and it's the only football field in the county," he said. "So finding a location with enough space has been a challenge for them."

Everyone has an opinion as to when full practices could

get underway; however, even the most optimistic of prognosticators are keeping their fingers crossed for a July 6 start. Regardless of the date, the Union coaching staff is already preparing to simplify the offense in response to the shortened prep time for the upcoming season.

"I think we'll have to cut back and simplify [the playbook] a little bit," he said. "But I believe it's better to do five things really good than 10 things mediocre. If we're able to come back after the July 4 dead week, I don't think it will hurt us that much. We weren't having spring practices away this year so we didn't lose that, but we're still a little behind on our passing game."

Fortunately for Union's young offense, every GHSA football program is in the same boat, and that's why Allison isn't hitting the panic button. Although fans shouldn't be shocked if defenses statewide seem a step ahead of their offensive counterparts during the early stages of the season, he said.

"I think that's a real possibility, as long as everyone is sticking to the GHSA regulations," he said. "We're having to simplify, but everyone is going to have to simplify on offense, so we're not alone."

"The big question is how much practice time we'll be allowed and that all depends on when we're able to come back."

## Questions loom over 2020 Senior Night football game

With the upcoming football season appearing more likely every day, there is still one major doubt surrounding the now-canceled Senior Night game on Nov. 6

Riverside Military Academy, the newest addition to Region 8-AA and Union County's 10th and final game, called off its football season in early May, at the height of the COVID-19 scare.

In response, Coach Allison has diligently sought a 10th opponent, but with limited success. He believes that finding a team from Riverside's now-canceled slate, who will also be one game short, is currently the best option. But recently, an RMA 2020 football schedule has been as difficult to obtain as toilet paper during a pandemic.

"Finding another game is definitely an option, it's just going to be a very hard option," he said. "I've been trying to get [RMA's] schedule to see if we can match up any games but I can't find one anywhere. We're also in a

tough situation because we're trying to make up a November 6th game instead of a September or early-October game."

If Union County is unable to find another opponent, Senior Night could be rescheduled for Oct. 16 vs Elbert County. The bye week is currently slated for Oct. 23 and the Panthers visit Rabun County on Oct. 30.

Fortunately, Union County originally had six home games on the 2020 schedule (included on Page 3C), with both scrimmage games on the road.

Furthermore, the loss of Riverside leaves only four teams in Region 8-AA - guaranteeing everyone a State playoff spot.

The Panthers expect to open the season Aug. 7 with a scrimmage contest at Towns County. The following Thursday they will visit White County for their second and final tune-up. Kickoff for both games is 7:30 p.m.

The regular season is scheduled to begin at home vs Fannin County on Aug. 21.



Coach Wade Hodges (middle - white shirt) observes a workout last Tuesday morning. The Panthers are seeing a 90% turnout on a team that expects to suit up 50-55 players this fall. Most of the other 10%, according to Allison, are injured or on vacation. Photo/Todd Forrest