

# Sports

See the Sports Section at ngame.com

## Coyne electrifies with Senior Night triple-double

### Rabun County narrowly escapes Blairsville on Friday but not without controversy

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nganews.com

Senior Dylan Coyne had a night he will never forget.

With a date to prom secured just moments before tip, the Union County forward put up career highs of 22 points and 10 assists, to go along with 11 rebounds.

The triple-double was the first by a Panther since 2005 when Derek "Shorty" Hughes accomplished the feat with double digit points, rebounds, and steals.

Before the Panthers (13-8, 3-2) went on to blast Murphy, NC, 79-41 on Saturday, Coyne took a leap of faith during the Senior Night ceremonies after the Lady Panthers' game.

While his bio was being read over the public address system, he included a prom invitation to fellow senior basketball star Lauren Zollinger.

"Dylan would like to take this opportunity to ask Lauren if she would give him the honor of taking her to prom," read Public Address Announcer Tim Hunter.

Zollinger immediately nodded, accepting the invite. Coyne responded with a giant smile and a sigh of relief. He went on to play the game of his life.

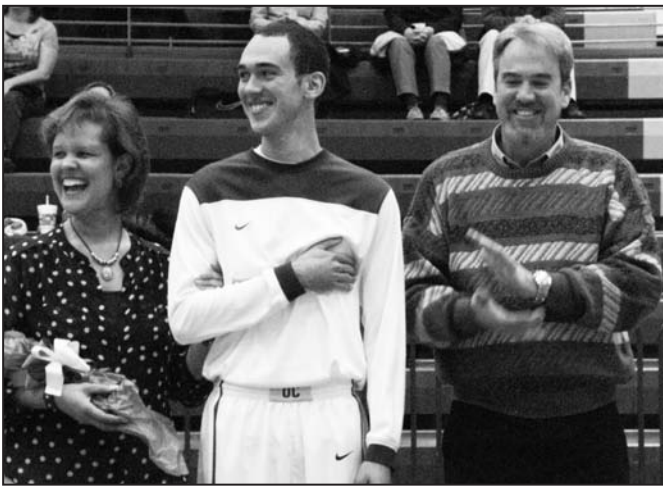
With senior Grant Schuette joining Coyne in the starting lineup, Union raced out to a 19-11 lead after a quarter and was never threatened again. Coyne knocked down two 15-foot jumpers during a 10-point opening frame.

He would then take on the roll of distributor for the remainder of the half, feeding junior Hunter Hughes, who lit up the Bulldogs for 16 points in the second frame as the Panthers opened up a 41-19 advantage at the break.

Coyne would connect on a baseline jumper in the quarter for 12 points at the intermission while Hughes led the way with 18 total points.

Coyne and Hughes would continue to pace the Union County onslaught, combining for 9 points in the third and the Panthers stretched their lead to 60-27.

Coyne came up with one of his 5 steals on the night and drew an intentional foul just 39 seconds into the fourth. He connected on both shots from the stripe - setting a new career



Seniors with family. Top - (L-R) Dylan Coyne and Eliyah Ryals. Bottom: Grant Schuette and Manager Jaron Whitmore. Photos/Todd Forrest

high for points.

He added to his personal best 23 seconds later by nailing another mid-range jumper.

With the home crowd already whipped into a frenzy, Coyne teamed up with Schuette to blow the roof off the building.

Leading the break, Coyne hit Schuette with a behind-the-back pass for a lay up, and his triple-double. On the ensuing possession he was rewarded for his generosity when he got in a lay up before checking out to a standing ovation.

"He was voted as the captain and it was unanimous," Panther Head Coach Casey Jones said. "Tonight he had a triple-double, which was awesome, but he brings so much more to the table. His character, his leadership skills, he's first class. As a first year coach, I'm grateful to have a kid like that."

Schuette's lay up off the Coyne feed gave him a career-high

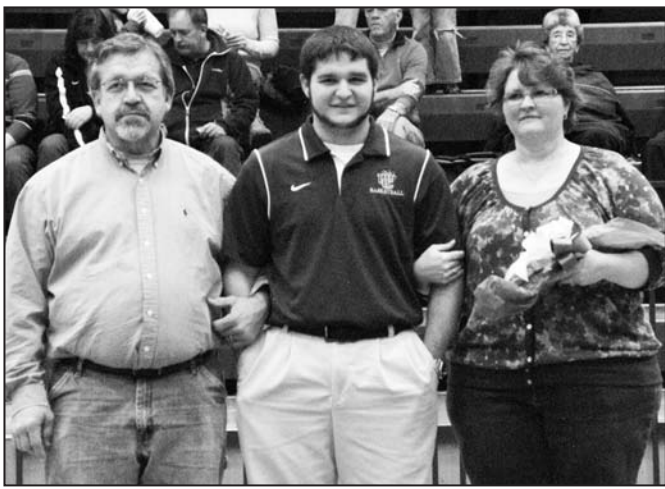
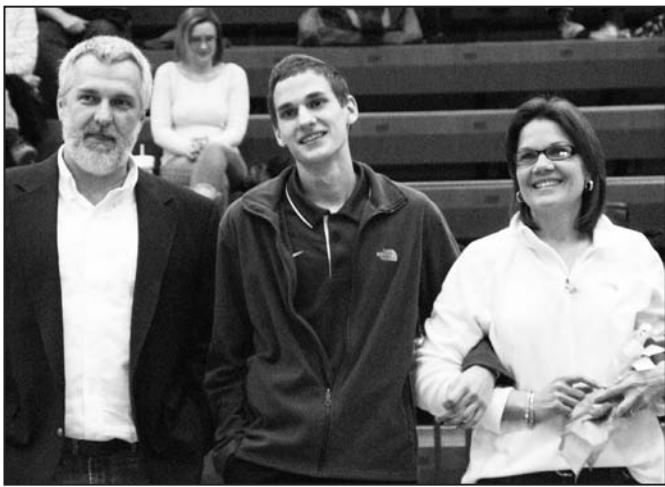
in the scoring department as well. Schuette finished with 11 points, topping his previous high set at Fannin a week earlier.

"Grant is a big body inside and he can finish around the bucket and he doesn't care to bang a little bit," Coach Jones said. "For having not played in a couple of years, he's really come in and helped us. I'm glad he decided to play."

Unfortunately, senior Eliyah Ryals is out with a hand injury or he would have certainly raised his scoring-ceiling with 15-plus points.

"Eliyah has had a tough year but he's got a lot of talent and is a good player," Coach Jones said. "Hopefully we can get him back before the playoffs because I know he really wants to be out there."

Hughes was just a point away from matching his career high as the junior guard poured in 23 points, but sat for most of the mercy-rule shortened fourth quarter. Meanwhile,



Seniors with family. Top - (L-R) Dylan Coyne and Eliyah Ryals. Bottom: Grant Schuette and Manager Jaron Whitmore. Photos/Todd Forrest

fans wanted to see. Union allowed a putback with 3 seconds to play and fell 66-64 to Rabun.

Despite Ralston Drake still out indefinitely, Union rallied from 13 down to tie things up at 54-54 with 4:31 to play. The teams exchanged baskets until junior Kyle Hamby nailed a pull-up jumper with 3:48 to give the Panthers their first lead since it was 21-19.

All tied up at 58-58, Union drained almost 90 seconds off the clock before Hughes found an opening and drove baseline, putting the Panthers back on top 60-58 with 48 seconds to play. Just seconds later, Coyne picked the Wildcats for a steal-and-score. With 43 seconds to play, the Panthers appeared to be in control at 62-58.

That's where things turned south, or north, depending on which side of the mountain you were from. Moments earlier, Hamby was knocked to the floor while in mid-air

on a lay up attempt. And with 30 seconds left in the contest, Rabun went inside for two and Union was whistled for a touch foul, resulting in a 3-point play - much to the dismay of the home crowd, with the Hamby no-call still fresh in their minds. The free throw trimmed the Panther lead to 62-61.

Union inbounded the ball and Hughes advanced across half court. He then passed to Hamby, who was fouled. But the clock didn't start, and when it was all sorted out, Rabun was somehow awarded an extra 6 seconds and now 28 seconds stood between the Panthers and the win.

Despite the confusion, Hamby got his much overdue chance at the line and connected on both shots of the 1-and-1, putting the Panthers ahead 64-61 with 22 seconds, no check that, 28 seconds on the clock.

It was the same song and dance on Rabun's next offensive possession when the Wildcats were awarded another 3-point play when it appeared from some angles that the Union players were getting out of the way, willing to surrender the lay up with a 3-point lead.

Instead, another Rabun free throw tied the game with 20 seconds left. From that point on, the Panthers made three costly mistakes and suffered the consequences.

Union wasted its chance at holding for the last shot when Rabun forced the Panthers to fire a pass over everyone's head, losing possession.

Then two offensive rebounds allowed on the final possession let the Cats get three shots at the game winner, and the third one dropped with 3 seconds to play.

Odom's full court pass to Hughes was on the money and the 22-footer at the buzzer nearly banked in, but the ball bounced off the backboard and then the front of the rim.

Coyne led the Panthers with 14 points and Odom scored 12 despite battling foul trouble. Hughes and Hamby added 9 points each. Amick had 8 points, Schuette ended up with six, while Danek, Shook, and freshman Lawson Baenninger had two each.

"It was a heartbreaker," Coach Jones said. "But I think we grew from it and will make us that tougher in the playoffs. I would take my guys over any team in the Region. We can still finish anywhere 3rd through 5th but I like our chances against anyone."

## Lady Panthers regroup on Senior Night after 17-point loss to Rabun

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nganews.com

On Saturday night, Union County honored its seniors and the Lady Panthers snapped a two-game skid and hopefully corrected course after dropping three-of-four.

The Lady Panthers jumped all over Murphy, NC in the early going and held off the gritty Lady Bulldog squad 53-41.

Union quickly erased an ugly loss to Rabun the night before and raced out to a 19-6 lead over Murphy after a quarter of play.

Juniors Lisa Nalaschi and Brooke Maddox also had to put tough individual performances from Friday in their rear views, and they did, scoring 5 and 6 points respectively in the first quarter.

The Lady Panthers would open the second frame with an 8-4 stretch when a Kaitlyn Day three made it 27-10 with 3:09 left before the half. But the Lady Bulldogs had plenty of fight left in them as they trimmed the Union lead to 29-16, before a free-throw by sophomore Layne Colwell made it 30-16 at the break.

An 11-2 run to open the third by the Lady Panthers and the game was showing all the major symptoms of a blowout, but again, Murphy responded - outscoring Union 8-2 over the final 4:10 of the third quarter. Entering the fourth, Union was nursing a comfortable 15-point margin.

On three separate occasions Murphy got within 12 but each



Seniors with family. Top - (L-R) Allie Stroman and Lauren Zollinger. Bottom: Madison Rich and Cheerleader Samantha Gentry. Photos/Todd Forrest

time the Lady Panthers slammed the door, led by Nalaschi's game high 17 points.

Day and Maddox finished with 11 points each while Colwell and senior Lauren Zollinger

chipped in 6 points a piece.

"Lauren has gone through a lot this year," Lady Panther Head Coach David Tucker said. "She is a great kid, these are all great kids, but she has had a tough time this



Seniors with family. Top - (L-R) Allie Stroman and Lauren Zollinger. Bottom: Madison Rich and Cheerleader Samantha Gentry. Photos/Todd Forrest

year overcoming injury, and she has done it."

Senior Madison Rich added 2 points and senior Allie Stroman grabbed 2 boards.

"Madison and Allie are al-

There is nothing more you can ask for."

On Friday night, Union County found themselves up double figures on Rabun County once again. This time the Lady Cats stormed passed and never took their foot off the accelerator, taking a 55-38 victory back to Clayton.

The Lady Panthers held an early 20-9 advantage but Rabun put the clamps down, holding the Union offense without a field goal for the next 13:06.

When Day connected on the Lady Panthers first basket since the first quarter, her team was down 37-26 with 3:30 left in the third. She would hit another runner in the lane keeping Union within 14 points but Rabun eventually put things away - opening up a 19-point fourth quarter lead.

"Our girls don't like contact and Rabun is a physical team," Coach Tucker said. "Then when Brooke (Maddox) got into foul trouble (4th foul with 4:29 left in the third) we just came apart."

Union still has an outside shot at first but would need a lot of help. The Lady Panthers can guarantee themselves a Top 2 spot in the Region 8-AA Tournament by simply winning out.

Union needs to knock off Jefferson on Wednesday then travel to Greene County on Saturday and take care of business to lock up the No. 2 seed.

A loss in both could drop the Lady Panthers to fourth while a split will likely result in a No. 3 seed in next week's tournament.

## Stancil, Eigel reach Sectionals; Floyd an alternate

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nganews.com

Norcross - Three Union County wrestlers will be moving on to the next round beginning in Dublin on Friday.

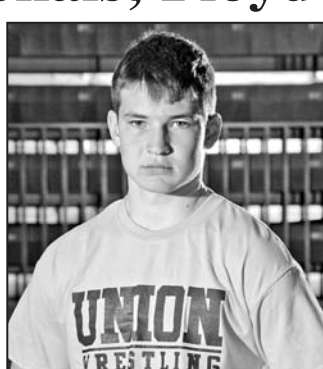
Seniors Chase Stancil and Jonathan Floyd and sophomore Justin Eigel will compete in the State Sectionals this weekend after strong showings at the Area 4-AA Tournament last weekend.

Stancil placed fourth at 138 pounds and Eigel, also fourth at 170 pounds. Floyd placed fifth in the 220-pound division and will make the trip as an alternate. There is a possibility that Floyd could see action with Greater Atlanta Christian suffering an injury to their 220-pound wrestler.

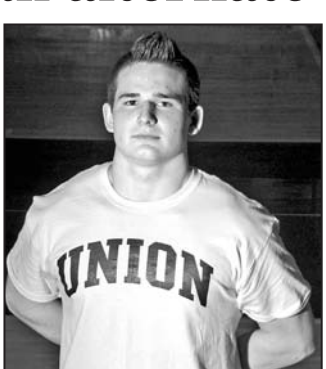
"This is great for Chase and Jon because they are two of our seniors and they wanted to finish



Chase Stancil



Justin Eigel



Jonathan Floyd

strong." Union Coach Michael Smith-Foot said. "Eigel is just a sophomore and will hopefully finish strong for us the next two years as well."

Coach Smith-Foot is hoping that Union County will leave Dublin with its first State Qualifier in school history, but was still impressed with his squads performance at Sectionals and the future of the program.

"We wrestled much better this year," he said. "Most boys made it to the quarters before losing their first match and then made it to the consolation quarters before being put out of the tournament. Almost all matches went the full three periods and many matches were lost by just a few points instead of by pin, tech fall, or major decision. We will have

11 wrestlers returning next year with our largest 8th grade class coming up. Four of our boys that represented us were just freshmen while two were sophomores, and two were juniors. We should have our first full team next year and every wrestler on the team will have at least two years experience as well. This will make a huge difference."

## MUSA Spring Registration

Mountain United Soccer Association is ready for spring soccer.

Registrations are currently being accepted for age groups U6-U14. This season we are offering online registration at www.mountainssoccer.org. Registration forms are also available on the website, to print and mail in. The deadline to register is Feb. 15th.

In Blairsville, Cott Beverage 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 spring season will begin in early March. 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 501(c)3 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 info contact the league at 706-994-4351, musa.soccer@gmail.com or visit us on the web at www.mountainssoccer.org.

