

UCHS Track and Field opens 2015 at Mt. Yonah Invitational

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Cleveland - The Track and Field program at Union County High School is off and running in 2015 after getting its feet wet last spring.

The Panthers sent shockwaves throughout Class AA last year when they sent several athletes to the State Sectionals, then went on to make some noise at the State Championships, despite having little, to no experience, and only participating in one regular season meet before the Region meet.

This year, Track and Field Coach Shawnetta Reece has high hopes for both squads, now that most have a year of experience under their belts.

Union County maybe a little green, but they aren't afraid to challenge the area's top programs. Two weeks ago, Coach Reece took her squad to the Mt. Yonah Invitational meet at White County where six of the other nine schools were from Class AAA or higher. Riverside Military Academy from Class AA took part along with Class A's Tallulah Falls - the only school from a smaller classification.

The girls 4x100 relay squad, consisting of junior Emma Garrison, senior Brooke Maddox, junior Stephanie Busse, and junior Amy Cummings were responsible for Union's marquee performance of the day, taking second place, 15 seconds behind first place White County.

Individually, Garrison, a two-time cross country State Champion, came in third in the 1600M and 800M races. In the 1600M race she finished three seconds back (5:53.06) of White County senior Kristen Mitchell (5:50.61) and 13 seconds behind Banks County senior Makayla Hewell. Garrison would hold off another two-time State cross country champion, White County's Jenna Gearing, who came in fourth, five ticks (5:58.47) back of Garrison.

"No surprises with Emma



Emmeline Stuart

Garrison," Coach Reece said. "She's running well despite severe shin splits during the cross-country season. She's picking right back up where she left off, getting better and better with each practice, and making a full comeback. I'm excited for her."

Union County senior Julia Lindsey, the 2014 Region 8-AA cross country champion placed seventh in the 1600M event with a time of 6-minutes, 27 seconds.

"Lindsey finished with times that she only achieved during the first round of state last year," Coach Reece said. "As she continues to improve, we will see her bringing home a lot of medals and being a top contender in the State competition in May."

Hewell and Gearing would place one-two in the 800M race event with

In the 800M Run, Garrison finished third with a time of 2-minutes, 41.19 seconds, coming in second to Mitchell (2:37.49) once again. Gainesville senior Kayla Kelley was first at 2:35.94.

Lindsey came in third in the 3200M event at 13:22. Jenna



Junior Jacob Kelley passes a Habersham Central runner during a relay race at the Mt. Yonah Invitational.

Gearing was second at 12:11, and Hewell first at 11:52.

"All of our athletes gave great performances in their events on Saturday," Coach Reece said. "Even though, some of them may not have had top 10 finishes, they set some new personal records (PR) for themselves. One of our goals is to keep setting new PRs and never be satisfied unless we are consistently improving our times and distances. They have shown true grit by training in cold, windy, and rainy weather combined."

Cummings took home bronze in the 200M Dash with a time of 28:26, four hundredths of a second behind runner up Jada Harrison, a freshman from Gainesville High. Gold went to Habersham Central sophomore Maya Banks, who was six tenths of a second better than Cummings. Maddox finished 11th in both the 100M Dash and 200M Dash with times of 15:20 and 31:32.

In the 400M Dash, Cummings placed third again at 1:07. White County freshman Rachel Gearing took first at 1:05 and Habersham Central's Marley Black came in second at 1:06.

"Cummings came home with three medals and is setting new PRs in her events," Coach Reece said. "She has been training hard and all that hard work is paying off."

Union County junior Karley Nix picked up a ninth place finish in the discus with a throw of 59-feet, 9 inches (59-09). Fellow junior Autumn Johnson was 16th with a throw of 36-09. Nix would take 10th in the shot put with a distance of 22-02. Johnson was 15th at 19-08.

"The girls team of nine athletes that competed Saturday brought home nine medals, which is outstanding considering the much larger schools that we faced," Coach Reece said.

On the men's side, junior Jacob Kelley was ninth in the 100M Dash - checking in at 11:66. In the 400M Dash Kelley placed 14th at 56:48, senior Will Stone was 16th at 58:00, and sophomore Zach Stone was 18th at 58:55. Freshman Cole Dockrey was 20th at 12:89 in the 100M race. Kelley also placed ninth in the long jump with a distance of 17-09. Will Stone was 10th and Zach Stone 11th in the high jump, each with a height of 5-02.



Sophomore Jakob Brown took part in both the 1600M and the 3200M taking 21st and 19th, respectively.

"Jacob Kelley performed well in the long jump, jumping 17-feet, 9 inches," Coach Reece said. "He is just an all-around great athlete that can be put in any jumping or running event and do well."

Zach Stone was eighth in the triple jump at 38-01 and freshman Cole Wright had a top 15 jump of 33-01.75.

"We had a few athletes that really pulled through on their performance despite a very limited practice schedule because of weather conditions that closed school," Coach Reece said. "Zach Stone was able to pull off an eighth place finish in the triple jump out of 18 jumpers with only one day of triple jump training."

In the men's 1600M race, sophomore Jakob Brown, freshmen Luke Collins and Evan Browning took 21st-23rd places with times just under six minutes. In the 3200M race, Brown was 19th at 12:36 and Browning 20th in 13 minutes-flat.

Freshman Cole Payne was Union's top placer in the 800M race taking 14th in 2:30.90. Collins and freshman Dylan

Dockery were 20th and 21st at 2:35.43 and 2:35.48.

Senior Eli Robledo was sixth in the discus throw with a distance of 104-01. Chris Drost was 19th with a toss of 73-10. Sophomore Chandler Day was 21st at 73-00. Robledo was 13th in the shot put at 36-04.50. Drost was 18th at 34-08, and sophomore Bo Lynch was 23rd with a distance of 29-00.

"Eli Robledo threw the discus 104 feet, not his best, but enough to give him a sixth place finish out of 23 throwers from eight other schools," Coach Reece said. "Greater distances will come with more throws and form refinement."

The Union County men were seventh in the 4x100 relay and ninth in the 4x400 relay.

"After seeing the athletes in action during our first meet, we can start training them more in the events they are best suited," Coach Reece said. "With the additional training in their specific area, we can become even more competitive and well prepared before our region meet next month."

Appalachian Trail Conservancy celebrates 90 years

Harpers Ferry, WV (March 3, 2015) - Today the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) celebrates 90 years of protecting the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). A long-standing partnership with the federal government, Trail maintaining clubs and thousands of volunteers has enabled the organization to preserve and manage the longest hiking-only footpath in the world.

The ATC was founded in 1925 by volunteers and federal officials working to build a continuous footpath along the Appalachian Mountains. A unit of the National Park Service, the A.T. ranges from Maine to Georgia and is approximately 2,185 miles in length. The Trail goes through fourteen states along the crests and valleys of the Appalachian mountain range from the southern terminus at Springer Mountain, GA, to the Trail's northern terminus at Katahdin, ME.

The A.T. has over 2-3 million people visit the Trail every year and about 2,500 people attempt to "thru-hike" the Trail. People from across the globe are drawn to the A.T. for a variety of reasons: to reconnect with nature, to escape the stress of city life, to meet new people or deepen old friendships, or to experience a simpler life.

The A.T. was completed in 1937 and is a unit of the National Park System. The A.T. is managed under a unique partnership between the public and private sectors that includes, among others, the National Park Service, the USDA Forest Service, an array of state agencies, the ATC, and 31 local Trail-maintaining clubs.

"This year marks a milestone for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy," said Ron Tipton, the ATC's executive director/CEO. "The Conservancy is widely respected and recognized for its



historic role in managing and protecting the Appalachian Trail, and we are committed to preserving this wonderful hiking experience for future generations to enjoy."

With central offices in Harpers Ferry, WV, a quarter-mile from the Trail since 1972, the ATC currently includes more than 43,000 members, 6,000 volunteers, a full & part time staff of about 50 in six locations and an annual budget of \$7.9 million and total assets of about \$15 million.

The ATC celebrates its 90th anniversary in the midst of its implementation of a new 5-year Strategic Plan. The plan, launched in early 2015, identifies five key goals: Proactive Protection, Engaged Partners, Effective Stewardship, Broader Relevancy, and Strengthened Capacity and Operational Excellence. Together, these goals not only reinforce the idea that the Trail can be enjoyed by a variety of users in multiple ways, but also that the A.T. should be readily accessible to all who wish to be a part of the experience.

For more information about the ATC's 90th anniversary, including ways to give back, visit www.appalachiantrail.org/90th.



Union County's Evan Browning at White County.

Statewide Turkey Hunting Season opens March 21st

Cluck. Purr. Gobble. Have you been practicing your turkey calling skills? Hunters eager for the opening of turkey hunting season in Georgia certainly have. The highly anticipated day is Saturday, March 21 and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division expects that the 2015 season should be a fair one.

"The coastal plain continues to have a stable to increasing population of turkeys, and we expect a good season from this area," says Kevin Lowrey, Wildlife Resources Division wild turkey project coordinator. "However, due to low reproduction numbers over the past three years, 2015 might be a challenging year for hunters, especially in the Piedmont Blue Ridge and Ridge and Valley Systems in Georgia."



With a bag limit of three gobblers per season, hunters have from Mar. 21 through May 15, 2015 to harvest their bird(s). With many pursuing wild turkeys on private land, hunters are reminded to always obtain landowner permission before hunting. NTMar18,28CA



Zach Stone during the relay race at the Mt. Yonah Invitational

Wounded Warrior Project benefits from Union County



(L-R): Skip Belton, WWP Coordinator Jason Bush, Charlie Sowers

The annual Wounded Warrior Golf Tournament proceeds go directly to the Wounded Warrior Project and a recent trip to the Atlanta Headquarters by two local Marines took a \$1,000 check to that beneficial program. We owe a lot to those that have given so much. The hosts of the tournament wish to thank all those players and contributors that helped raise the money.

This year's tournament coming up on Friday, August 28th will again be played at the Old Union Golf Course. It will be best ball foursomes competing for trophies in vari-

ous categories. Sign ups are being taken now. To insure a place in the tournament remember, foursomes are limited. There will be a shotgun start at 1 p.m. Lunch will be provided. For more information, call Skip Belton at 706-994-4809 or Charlie Sowers at 706-745-5123.

Those same two Marines also host the Annual Adult Spelling Bee this year on April 16th. The Bee will be held at the Blairsville Civic Center starting at 6:30 p.m. Free admission and lots of door prizes, (and lots of fun for everyone). NMar18,218CA

'Wanna Run With the Dawgs? Mountain DAWG 5K Run

You may not know it, but there is a very busy group of volunteers in the north Georgia and western North Carolina Mountains - the Community Council of the Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center. The Council works hard to provide educational programs for children and adults, preserve our native plants and mountain heritage, all without charging any money to participants or students. The funding for their programs comes from gifts from friends through an annual capital campaign. This year, the Community Council of the Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center is trying something new, a 5K Run fundraiser.



can also go to the website of the GMRE Center, download a form, fill it out and mail it in. That website is www.gmrec.uga.edu.

Registration is \$20, with a family rate of \$60 for four registrants. Short sleeve t-shirts will be guaranteed to all participants who register online by March 18, or post-marked by March 16, and as supply lasts on race day. Registration is also available in person, on the day of the race. Race Day Registration will be

gin at 9 a.m. Race begins at 10 a.m. Awards will be given to overall male and female, and top three male and female in standard age groups.

Finish line management will be provided by Classic Race Services with complete results online at www.ClassicRaceServices.com, www.RunningInTheUSA.com, www.CoolRunning.com, and www.active.com.

Please remember that the proceeds will benefit the Environmental Education programs of the Community Council of the University of Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center. The Council provides programs to children, such as Johnny Appleseed and All About Trees, at no charge to students or schools. In addition, the Council has planted an Ethnobotanic Garden on the grounds of the GMRE Center, with guided tours available May through September.

Goodies From the Heart says 'thank you' to New Liberty

The youth of New Liberty Baptist Church wanted to help the Goodies from the Heart food program so they came up with the idea to have a coon hunt and donate the proceeds to the program.

The hunt was held on Feb 7th and raised \$462.81!

Goodies from the Heart wants to thank New Liberty Baptist Church and their youth group for their support.

Goodies from the Heart is a nonprofit organization that will provide primary and elementary school aged children in Union County with an assortment of healthy, convenient meals and snacks when regular food service programs are unavailable. Goodies from the Heart will purchase food directly from the Georgia Mountain Food Bank to keep cost at a minimum.

Union County Recreation Department

Annual Easter Egg Hunt



5000 EGGS

MEEKS PARK

MARCH 28th • 10 AM

Ages 2-12 Years Old

Drawing for Easter Basket

in each Age Group

Egg Hunt located at Upper Ball Fields

Thank you to our Sponsors!

United Community Bank