

Sports

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State First Round: Panthers host Manchester on Friday

Union wraps up regular season with blowouts over Murphy, NC and Andrews, NC

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For the fourth consecutive year, Union County baseball will be hosting the First Round of the Class AA State Tournament.

Following a 15-year stretch without ever reaching the State, Union made it in 2010, then in 2013, they advanced for the first time in 18 years.

The Panthers (15-7, 9-2) will host Manchester, the No. 4 seed from Region 5-AA. The Blue Devils enter the State playoffs with a 6-18 overall record and a 2-10 region-mark.

By winning Region 8-AA and earning the No. 1 seed, Union has avoided Region 5-AA's No. 2 and No. 3 teams, Bremen and Heard County, who each finished with 13 wins and an 8-4 record in region-play.

The No. 1 seed has paid dividends for the Panthers, who are matched up with a Region that sees a significant drop-off in talent outside the top three teams.

Union and Manchester



Senior Joseph Mancuso. Photo/Todd Forrest

will square off in a best-of-three series beginning with double-header on Friday. First pitch is slated for 4:30 p.m. with Game 3 being held on Saturday, if necessary.

Should the Panthers advance, they would host the winner of the Early County (No. 3 Region 1-AA) at Bleckley County (No. 2 Region 4-AA) best-of-three series.

Union also benefits from

drawing the weaker half of the State Tournament. Seven of the top 11 teams in Class AA are on the other side of the bracket, including top ranked Wesleyan, No. 3 Holy Innocents, No. 4 GAC, No. 6 Gordon Lee, No. 7 Jeff Davis, No. 9 Berrien, and No. 11 Lamar County.

The Panthers would also not face No. 2 Bowdon until the Final Four. The highest ranked team Union would see



Sophomore Patrick Baggett. Photo/Todd Forrest

in the Elite 8 would be No. 8 Lovett, who is the No. 3 team from Region 6-AA, meaning the Panthers would host, should the two meet up with a trip to the Final Four on the line.

Last week Union played a pair of tune-up games and easily handled Andrews, NC 20-5 and Murphy, NC 14-5.

At Murphy, Candler Colwell doubled twice during a 3-for-4 game with three runs

and two RBIs.

Lance Rich was 3-for-4 with two runs and two RBIs.

Patrick Baggett finished 2-for-4 with a double, three RBIs, and a run. RJ Banton was 3-for-5, including a double, two runs, and two RBIs.

Andrew Brown went 2-for-3 with a pair of runs while driving in a pair of runs.

Josh Nachtrieb doubled while Joseph Mancuso and

Crawford Colwell each finished with a base hit. Nachtrieb also pitched two scoreless innings.

Banton gave up one earned run in two innings and Cole Davis allowed two earned in two innings.

At Andrews, Union used a 10-run third inning to blow things wide-open in its final game before the State Tournament.

Mancuso drove in five runs during a 2-for-2 game that included a grand slam - his fourth homer of the season.

Logan Dyer doubled twice and drove in a career-high four runs.

Baggett, Candler Colwell, Crawford Colwell, and Andrew Brown all recorded two-hits in the game.

Banton doubled and drove in two, Slade Rowan also doubled, Dawson Groves walked twice, Rich drove in two runs, while Nachtrieb, Michael Raper, and Jackson Colwell added one RBI each.

Davis pitched three scoreless innings and freshman Coleson Daniel allowed three earned runs in two innings of work.

State: Lady Panthers host Chattahoochee County on Friday

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After securing back-to-back Region 8-AA Championships, the Lady Panthers are hungry to reach the Elite 8 for the second straight year and that journey begins when they host the No. 4 seed from 5-AA Chattahoochee County (3-7) on Friday at 6 p.m.

While the two teams don't share a common opponent, Bremen, the Region 5-AA Champion fell 2-1 to Region 8-AA's No. 2 seed Social Circle, who Union shutout 3-0.

As for Bremen and Chattahoochee County, they met twice. Bremen took the first meeting 8-0 and the second 10-0.

Based on that point-differential, Union (10-2, 5-0) should end the game via mercy stoppage, but games, especially those in the postseason, aren't played on paper and margin-of-victory stats can go right and out the window.

The last time Union met up



Ellie Garrison (10) and Ashlyn Hall (16) at Oglethorpe. Photo/submitted

with a team from Region 5-AA it was in the first round of the 2013 State Tournament and the Lady Panthers only held a 1-0 halftime advantage vs an overmatched Manchester. Union would go on to score six unanswered goals in the second half for the 7-0 victory.

Last week, Union played its final Region 8-AA contest when they traveled to Oglethorpe

County (who will represent 8-AA as the No. 4 seed in this week's State Tourney) and laid a 10-0 beatdown on the Lady Patriots thanks to six goals and an assist from freshman Madison Yost.

The Lady Panthers also traveled to Lumpkin County where they lost 4-0 to their future Region 7-AA foe.

Friday's rematch with



Ansley Garrison (2) and Brenna Innis (4) during the 10-0 rout at Oglethorpe County. Photo/submitted

Towns was canceled due to rain.

In the win at Oglethorpe (3-6-2, 2-3) Union put up seven first half goals before ending the game with their 10th goal in the second half.

Anzly Sherman, another freshman, got in on the scoring

barrage with a pair of goals, while Rachel Vester and Katilyn Gallagher rounded out the scoring.

Ansley Garrison and Layne Baenninger each dished off three assists. Sophomore Ashlyn Hall, junior Braedyn Robbins, and Sherman all contributed one assist.

Yost's six goals in-a-game is a UCHS freshman record and is tied for second most in team history behind Jamie Weldon's seven goals in-a-game back in 2001.

Yost also became the first freshman in team history to reach 20 goals in a season.

State soccer: Panthers open Thursday with visit from Temple

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When the postseason opens Thursday, there shouldn't be a more finely-tuned squad when it comes to competing in overtime and penalty kick sessions than Region 8-AA Runner Up Union County.

After getting shutout 4-0 at Lumpkin County earlier in the week, Union responded with a 3-2 victory at Oglethorpe County on Thursday that was determined by penalty kicks.

The Patriots took a 1-0 advantage into the intermission before the shorthanded Panthers responded with a pair of second half goals by freshman Brian Smith and junior Adam Rowe.

However, Oglethorpe managed to tack on another goal during the second 40 minutes that forced Union into its fourth



Parker McCombs with a header at Oglethorpe County. Photo/submitted

overtime (4-0) of the season.

Both of the extra sessions were played to a scoreless standstill and for the third time in their

four overtimes, the Panthers needed penalty kicks to secure the win.

Union (8-3-1, 5-1) won the



Jesus Palomo (13) and Matthew Van Pelt (11) at OC. Photo/submitted

PK session 2-1 with goals from senior Jesus Mancillas and junior Adam Bachman.

Justin Eigel record one PK save while allowing just one

PK goal.

The Panthers first round opponent Temple - the No. 3 seed from 5-AA - will travel to Blairsville on Thursday with kickoff

scheduled for 6 p.m. at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

The Tigers enter the postseason with a record of 7-8-1 overall and 5-3 in Region 5-AA, despite losing four of their first five games of 2016.

The Panthers and Temple have no common opponent, but like the girls side, Region 5-AA's No. 1 boys team is also Bremen (undefeated in region-play), who shutout Temple twice by scores of 6-0 in both games.

However, Bremen fell 5-2 to Social Circle (No. 3 seed in 8-AA), who lost at Union County in overtime.

The status of Union's injured starting midfielders Lawson Baenninger and Sam Seiler is "questionable," according to Head Coach Tim Hunter.

"I hope they are good for Thursday, but it will depend on their progress," he said.

The duo hasn't played since Apr. 12th.

Union County Track and Field sending five to State Sectionals

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Tiger - Emma Garrison picked up two more Region 8-AA titles in the 800M and 1600M races at the Region Championships, held at Rabun County High School.

Jacob Kelley also won a pair of Region titles in the High Jump and the 400M race.

Anna Danek was the Runner Up twice, placing second in the 3200M race and the 800M race.

Stephanie Busse and Cole Payne also placed second in the Shot Put and the 800M race, respectively.

Garrison saved her best time of the year for the Region Championship, posting a time of 2 minutes, and 25 seconds, good enough for third best in the state, just a half-second off the first place time.

Danek was 10 seconds behind Garrison with a personal best time of 2:35.



Emma Garrison (second from right) and Anna Danek (second from left) finished 1st and 2nd in the 800M race at the 8-AA championships.

Kelley also set personal bests with a time of 52.75 in the 400M and 6-foot, 2 inches in the High Jump.

Both boys and girls 4x400 Relay teams recorded their best times but fell short

by less than a second from advancing to State sectionals. "Two freshmen, Chad Buzzard (boys) and Jordan Stubblefield (girls) had to step up late in the season to fill spots that had been vacated," said Union

County Track and Field Coach Shawnetta Reece. "They both ran a very good race and did everything expected of them."

Earlier in the week, Rabun County hosted the region preliminaries where Zach

Stone qualified for the Region finals in the Long Jump, Zach Gilliam qualified in the Discus, Courtney Moose and Chris Drost both qualified in the Shot Put.

Emmaline Stuart quali-

fied in the 300M Hurdles, Evan Browning in the 3200M race.

State Sectionals will be held Saturday at Greater Atlanta Christian in Norcross where Union will compete against Regions 3, 6, 7, and 8.

The top four from each region will advance to the State meet next month in Albany (May 5-7) and Jefferson (May 12-14).

UCHS Golf says 'thank you'

Union County High School golf would like to thank Old Union and Butternut Creek Gold Courses for practice and match locations.

They would also like to thank Xaxby's, Nelson Tractor, Woodmen of the World Lodge 1180, Southern Bank and Trust, United Community Bank, Steve Rowe, John Wischmeyer, Lamin-X, Protective Film, Alexander's Store, G & G Bakery, Park Sterling Bank. Their generosity allowed the team to purchase Titleist golf bags.