

Rowe to hit the links as a Mountain Lion in 2014

By Todd Forrest
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Union County senior James Rowe has proven that he can already compete, and sometimes defeat the members of the Young Harris College golf team.

The old saying that goes, "if you can't beat them, join them," goes out the window in this instance. Although that's likely what the Young Harris College golf coach was saying about Rowe, leading to the recruitment of one of the best golfers to come out of Union County High School in recent years.

Rowe, who finished third in Region 8-AA earlier this month, is headed for the State Match at Rock Creek Golf Course in Vidalia.

So before Rowe switches from Panther purple to Mountain Lion purple, his goal is to bring home Union County High School's second State Championship in golf (Jamie Gibson - 1990).

The Young Harris location had a lot to do with Rowe's decision, since he has so many friends over there and some already on the golf team.

"I have a close friend that



James Rowe signs his Letter of Intent to Young Harris with his family and coaches. Photo/Todd Forrest

goes to Young Harris College that I have known my whole life and it was the best opportunity for me to play golf somewhere," Rowe said. "I like the direction that the program is headed. Its Division II, in the Peach Belt Conference, there will be a lot of competition and lot of good players."

As of now, Rowe is going to be a biology major but not sure about what he'll be doing in four years.

"I'm not sure where I will be as far as golf in four years, but if golf doesn't work out, I'll more than likely try to become a physical therapist."

As for the near future,

Rowe is focused on the Class AA State Match next month.

"I've only seen the course once in pictures but I'm going down a couple of days in advance," he said. "So I will have plenty of practice so I can hopefully have a good showing for my school and my golf game as well."

NASCAR 2013

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Happy Harvick wins at Richmond

Fresh tires allowed Kevin Harvick to win Saturday night's Cup race in a green-white-checked-flag finish at Richmond.

Harvick came to pit road for tires on Lap 396 of the 400-lap race, after Brian Vicker's slapped the Turn 3 wall to bring out the race's last caution. Harvick returned to the track in fourth position, but made short work of the other three drivers who did not pit.

He beat Clint Bowyer to the finish line by .343 seconds to win his first NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race of the season, his second at Richmond and the 20th of his career.

"When the tires cause you to fall off almost two seconds, you've got to come in and get tires," he said. "There's not very many guys that stayed out. It all worked out tonight. We've been on the other side of it this year, so to be in Victory Lane is great."

Bowyer led 113 laps but didn't have a car that could stay with Harvick at the end.

"We had a good car—we just didn't have a great car," Bowyer said. "It seemed like we were just too tight on the throttle. It wouldn't quite turn and come up off (the corner). It really got wild there at the end. I was just lucky enough to be on the bottom (for the final restart)."

Joey Logano, Juan Montoya, Jeff Burton, Carl Edwards, Matt Kenseth, Aric Almirola, Kurt Busch, and Dale Earnhardt Jr. were the remaining top-10.

Kurt Busch and Tony Stewart, repeatedly swapped shots with each other on the cool-down lap. Stewart was fifth on the final restart but dropped to 18th at the finish after Busch rubbed him out of the racing groove during a two-lap free-for-all that saw lots of contact throughout the field.

Jimmie Johnson had a lot of trouble and finished

12th, but the five-time champion gained ground on his closest pursuers. He now leads second-place Carl Edwards by 43 points and Kahne and Dale Earnhardt Jr. by 46. Reigning Cup champion Brad Keselowski finished 33rd on the bottom end of a roller-coaster day that saw him recover from a scrape with the turn 2 wall only to drop a cylinder in the late going.

Top-10 points leaders after 9 of 36: 1. Johnson-343, 2. Edwards-300, 3. Kahne-297, 4. Earnhardt-297, 5. Bowyer-290, 6. Keselowski-284, 7. Kyle Busch-278, 8. Biffle-272, 9. Harvick-271, 10. Menard-271.

KESELOWSKI TAKES NATIONWIDE RACE

Polesitter Brad Keselowski held off Kevin Harvick in a 12-lap run to the finish to win Friday night's Nationwide race at Richmond.

Keselowski passed Kyle Busch to the lead with nine laps left, with Harvick following into second place a lap later. Keselowski crossed the finish line .718 seconds ahead of Harvick with Busch rolling home in third.

"It's very gratifying," Keselowski said. "We've had a lot of seconds this year (two in the Nationwide Series), and we've been really close on the Cup side. We just haven't been able to get that win. We've struggled here at Richmond, too, both in the Cup and the Nationwide cars, so it's great to get that turned around and finally get to Victory Lane is great."

Brian Vickers, Regan Smith, Elliott Sadler, Sam Hornish, Kyle Larson, Travis Pastrana, and Reed Sorenson were the remaining top-10 finishers.

Top-10 points leaders after 7 of 33: 1. Hornish-259, 2. Smith-238, 3. Scott-236, 4. Allgaier-225, 5. Sadler-224, 6. Vickers-222, 7. A. Dillon-222, 8. Kligerman-219, 9. Bayne-213, 10. Larson-204.

THE NASCAR CIRCUS



"Happy" Kevin Harvick, Richmond Cup winner. Photo/Todd Forrest

CONTINUES

When you're an 800 pound gorilla you can not only make your own rules, but you also have the power to levy any penalties you like.

That's what's been happening within the Cup series this year.

Knowing how NASCAR loves publicity, I often wonder if they create situations, knowing it will generate sensational emotions, just to gain added fan exposure.

It's like creating a mountain out of a molehill, to gain an expected result.

The latest incident occurred last week after Matt Kenseth won the Kansas Cup race. The engine in his No. 20 Toyota car failed inspection at NASCAR's Research and Development Center, because one of the engine connecting rods was 2.5 grams too light.

"I think the penalties are grossly unfair," said Kenseth. "I think it's borderline shameful. There's no argument the part was wrong. They weighed it and it was wrong. However, there is an argument that there certainly was no performance advantage."

"If you can find any unbiased, reputable, knowledgeable engine-builder and if they saw the facts, what all the rods weighed. The average weight of all the rods was well above the minimum -- 2.5 (grams) above the minimum at least. There was one in there that was way heavy."

Crew chief Jason Ratcliff was fined \$200,000 and suspended from NASCAR until the completion of the next six Cup races and placed on probation until Dec. 31.

Car owner Joe Gibbs has lost 50 championship car owner points.

Driver Matt Kenseth has lost 50 championship driver points.

Since all Toyota engines are supplied by the Toyota factory, there was no blame on the part of Joe Gibbs Racing.

NASCAR VP of Competition Robin Pemberton discussed NASCAR's decisions on Friday:

"As everyone knows there are a few things that are understood in the garage area that are big. When you talk about engines, you talk about tires, and you talk about fuel. That's a common thread that's been understood, and it's stood the test of time for the last 65 years. Mess with those areas, and the penalties are severe. But when you look in the case of an engine, the only time we really get a chance to look internally at an engine is post-race. Some of our most severe penalties over time have surrounded engine infractions."

When asked why the team was penalized rather than the manufacturer, Pemberton replied: "That's tough too. Because when you look at, in their particular situation, we probably don't know all the details, but we do know they come from an outside vendor for the most part, and I don't know how you would go -- it's very difficult to go to an outside vendor and penalize them whether it's springs or shocks or parts that are bought and bolted on race cars. That's why in today's world we all know and relate to the fact that it stops at the crew chief and stops at the owner and stops at the organization that is here to compete."

Jeff Gordon said a couple weeks ago, "It's their sandbox, and if you want to race, you have to race their way."

The circus will continue. The monkeys will just shift their focus to another team.

Weekend Racing: The Cup and Nationwide teams are the longest track on the circuit, the 2.66-mile Talladega Superspeedway. The Trucks do not race again until May 17.

Sat., May 4, Nationwide Series race 8 of 33; Starting time: 3 pm ET; TV: ESPN.

Sun., May 5, Sprint Cup race 10 of 36; Starting time: 1 pm ET; TV: FOX.

Racing Trivia Question: Kasey Kahne's Cup career began in 2004. Which team did he start with?

Last Week's Question: How many Cup races has Joe Nemecek won? He has four; 2004 at Kansas, 2003 at Richmond, 2001 at Rockingham, 1999 at New Hampshire.

You may contact the Racing Reporter at hodges@race500.com

Joe Collins
Tips from the Range

A score that qualifies as a legal USGA round of golf consists of 18 holes. You are only allowed 14 clubs under the rules of golf if you are using a stipulated round to confirm or establish your handicap. Your handicap is based on an average score total of at least 10 legal rounds. The score of each round is the base number used to confirm a USGA handicap. Nothing affects this base score more than the "short game".

When we talk about the short game, we are talking about what we do on and around the green. Chipping is the act of hitting really short shots from the edge of the green and trying to get the ball as close to the flag as possible. Putting is in direct association with the ball lying on the green and our efforts to roll said ball into the hole. These short shots have the most positive or negative influence in relation to our total score of any of the shots we hit in a legal round of golf. Trust me on this!

You are only allowed 14 clubs as I mentioned earlier. What is the only club that one uses, theoretically, on every hole? Answer: the putter. If the putter is the most used club in a given round then it will probably have the biggest influence on your score. If short putts are easier than long putts, then chipping becomes the second biggest influence on your score. Get the picture of how important the short game is? The short game really affects your total score and by relation your handicap.

It's hard to be consistent with your short game unless you play a lot of golf and even then it's difficult. The fundamentals we use in performing the short game are based on one concept and that is acceleration. The club must be speeding up as it goes through impact on a short shot. If it's slowing down, then you will have problems.

The proper fundamentals of correctly hitting a chip shot are simple. First, place almost all your weight on the front foot and open your stance to the line you want the ball to travel on. This line will be determined by the slope and speed of the green. You must play the curvature of the

green with a chip the same way you would a putt. Your feet will typically be closer together than on a full shot.

Next, place your hands in front of the ball with the grip of the club ahead of the club head. Use the same grip you would use to hit a full shot. Your hands will stay in front of the club head all the way through the shot. Never let the club head outrun the hands. Finally, use only your shoulders to move the club not your wrists and hands. Keep the backswing short and accelerate through the impact area while keeping your eye on the ball until it is gone on its way.

The fundamentals of putting are simple but very difficult to do correctly. First, find a balanced stance the same way you would on a long shot. Center yourself over the ankles with your weight distributed equally from the front of your feet to the heels.

Next, let your arms fall limp under your shoulders to determine the placement of the putter grip in relation to your stance. Grip the putter with a reverse overlap so that the forward index finger is lapped over the bottom hand fingers. Work with this concept because grips are very independent from golfer to golfer. The point is that the forward wrist never breaks down. This will cause the putter head to close and you will pull the putt. Most importantly never move your head until the ball is rolling down the intended line. Head movement is the number one fault of a bad putt.

Finally, use your shoulders to move the putter head and not your hands and arms. The small muscles of the hands and arms are extremely detrimental to a good stroke.

Practice is the key to maintaining a solid short game and it does not have to be done on the course. Putting and chipping at home on the carpet drives my wife crazy but it is the only way that I can get enough practice in to keep my short game sharp. Besides, she calms down when I bring home some "skins" money and take her out to dinner.

Try these fundamentals and hopefully you will lower your scores but remember that practice is the key. For every hour you practice swinging, spend two hours on your short game.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

Spring football underway

By Todd Forrest
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Spring Football kicks off on Wednesday as Union County begins preparation for the 2013 season.

"We will be looking to improve our basic fundamentals," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said. Getting to know any new players and upcoming freshmen."

"This time will allow us to get to see our new guys and allow them to adapt to us and the fundamentals of our system," Union Offensive Coordinator Howard McCombs said. "During this time we will



Brian Allison

introduce them to the basics of our system and we will focus almost exclusively on techniques and fundamentals."

Spring practice is scheduled to end on Wednesday May 15th. The cookout is scheduled for Friday May 10th at 6 p.m. for the High School and Middle School players.

Woody Gap boys' tennis make historic trip to State

By Todd Forrest
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Rome - The Woody Gap boys tennis team finished in third place at last week's Area Tournament, clinching the Falcons' first ever trip to the State Tournament.

After losing the first round to Trion, the Falcons defeated Commerce to guarantee a State berth. Woody Gap had a shot to finish in the top two but fell to Gordon Lee. In the third place match, the Falcons knocked off Wilkinson County to take the No. 3 seed in the State Tournament against Johnson County.

The Lady Falcons fell to Lincoln County and Georgia Military College.



JV Panthers win back-to-back league titles



Right: The Union County JV Panther baseball team finished in first place in the league for the second consecutive season.

On Saturday, April 20th, Union County defeated White County in the Championship Game 6-5 after Sam Gilbert hit a game winning 2-run homer in the bottom of the sixth inning. Losing only once in the regular season, Union was the No. 1 seed entering the tournament and defeated Pickens County in the first game, 13-2. In the Championship Game, sophomore Tyler Odom worked a complete game to pick up the win. Gilbert's homer came on an 0-2 pitch and was his first and only home run of the season. The Panthers didn't hit a home run during the season but went deep four times in the playoffs.

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Directions from Blairsville: Take Hwy 129 South (Gainesville Hwy.) approx 8 miles. Turkey Shoot will be held in the field on the left just past Owltown Rd. If you make it to Hwy. 180 East you've went too far.