

Sports

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UCHS athletics 2015-16 year-in-review (part one)

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North Georgia News
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Union County High School capped off the 2015-16 school year with one its most successful athletic campaigns across the board with seven programs finishing in the top 10 in their respective sport and six different programs claiming back-to-back Region 8-AA titles.

Union County finished 11th overall in the Directors Cup standings which ranks schools based on their total athletic success. The Panthers' 11th place finish was behind six private schools. In the girls Directors Cup standings, Union County was 10th place behind six private schools and the boys were 17th overall behind eight private schools.

Union did lose points for not offering as many sports as other programs across the state, as well as in 8-AA, where some were able gain a headstart on UCHS for that very reason. In Region 8-AA alone, Riverside, Social Circle, and Rabun County were able to accumulate points over Union in sports such as volleyball, boys and girls tennis, swimming, and cheerleading.

Overall champion, Lovett was able to take advantage of a boys and girls lacrosse program – a sport that this newspaper writer will not live to see played at UCHS.

The athletic dominance began in the fall when Union County Cross Country swept the 8-AA Championships at Riverside Military Academy back in October with individual Region champs Emma Garrison and Lance Underwood leading the way.

Both teams would finish in the Top 10 at the State Championships in Carrollton, two weeks later.

Meanwhile, the football

Rank	Overall	Points	Boys	Points	Girls	Points
1	Lovett	1252.0	Pace Academy	692.0	Wesleyan	679.0
2	Wesleyan	1222.0	Greater Atlanta Christi	653.0	Lovett	613.0
3	Pace Academy	1144.0	Lovett	639.0	Bremen	524.0
4	Greater Atlanta Christi	1052.0	Holy Innocents'	551.5	Holy Innocents'	498.0
5	Holy Innocents'	1049.5	Wesleyan	543.0	Vidalia	479.0
6	Bremen	983.0	Bremen	459.0	St. Vincent's Academy	464.0
7	Vidalia	872.0	Benedictine	426.0	Pace Academy	452.0
8	Bleckley County	791.0	Rabun County	403.0	Bleckley County	416.0
9	Rabun County	773.0	Vidalia	393.0	Greater Atlanta Christi	399.0
10	Darlington	735.5	Fitzgerald	392.0	Union County	386.0
11	Union County	659.0	Bleckley County	375.0	Darlington	374.5
12	Fitzgerald	650.0	Darlington	361.0	Gordon Lee	374.0
13	Social Circle	644.5	Thomasville	344.0	Armuchee	371.5
14	Model	591.0	Model	303.0	Rabun County	370.0
15	Lamar County	588.0	Riverside Military	303.0	Social Circle	367.5
16	Thomasville	565.0	Social Circle	277.0	Lamar County	349.0
17	Armuchee	545.5	Union County	273.0	Model	288.0
18	Gordon Lee	534.0	Bowdon	265.0	Fitzgerald	258.0
19	Jeff Davis	514.0	Jeff Davis	261.0	Jeff Davis	253.0
20	Berrien	479.0	Monticello	252.0	Coosa	240.0

The 2015-16 Director's Cup standings rank the schools in Class AA based on all sports. Each school is given a score based on reaching, and then advancing at state. A State Champion receives 100 points for that sport - the most you can receive per sport. The overall top 20 rankings are on the far left. The boys top 20 are in the middle and the girls top 20 rankings are on the far right. Courtesy / www.gadaonline.com

team and softball team were on their way to a runner-up finish in Region 8-AA with the softball team reaching the Elite 8 in Columbus for the fourth time in 10 years.

Following a regular season that saw Union County softball set a new record for regular season wins, Union County swept Bowdon at home in the first round of State before traveling to Lamar County and taking two-of-two to advance to Columbus for the first time since 2010.

Unfortunately, the injury bug bit hard in the Elite 8 as Union was matched up with the defending State Champion

Gordon Lee in the opener.

After falling to Gordon Lee on day one, Union was eliminated by Seminole County the following morning.

Union County football finished with its second consecutive 9-win season and just missed the State Sweet 16 by one point during a 56-55 overtime loss to Bowdon. The Union County football senior class graduated as the winningest class in the history of the program while senior quarterback Joseph Mancuso rewrote the Union County record books – setting school records in regular season, postseason, and career offensive numbers.

During the regular season, Union defeated Lumpkin County and Fannin County for the second consecutive year, then knocked off Greene County for the third straight time. In the season finale, the Panthers pulled away at Washington Wilkes to snatch the No. 2 seed from the Tigers for the second year-in-a-row.

Hosting Bowdon in the opening round of state, Union rallied from a 20-6 deficit to tie the game at 27-27 early in the second half. The two teams would exchange scores for the remainder of the game with Mancuso hitting sophomore receiver Cole Wright from 9 yards

out, with less than 15 seconds to play to force overtime with the game tied 48-48.

In the extra session, Mancuso and senior Knox Kiernan hooked up for a 3-yard scoring strike to put Union on top at 55-48. Bowdon would respond with a touchdown and a 2-point conversion to steal the win from the Panthers.

Union County sports would move indoors during the winter months and the Lady Panthers basketball team would overcome an 0-3 start to finish at 17-10, place second in Region 8-AA, and earn the program's first trip to the Sweet 16 since 2009 with a win over

Bowdon.

The guys would make history of their own as they won their first State Tournament game in 15 years when they went on the road to defeat a familiar face in Bowdon. The victory was Union County basketball's first true State Tournament road victory in school history. Prior to this past February, all of Union's State wins were either at home or at a neutral site.

In the second round, the Panthers would lose at Class AA's No. 1 team Thomasville and the Lady Panthers were edged at Putnam County, who went to reach the Final 4.

What's even more remarkable about the basketball season is the amount of firepower that both teams lost to graduation. The Lady Panthers replaced four starters – including Region Player of the Year Brooke Maddox. Meanwhile, the guys lost four starters who had all been contributors since their sophomore seasons.

Union County wrestler Logan Nelson placed fifth at State Sectionals in the 160-pound division to become the most successful wrestler in the program's short history. Joining Nelson at sectionals were Logan McClure (132 pounds) and heavyweight Josh Silvers. However, the highlight of the season was defeating private school powerhouse Greater Atlanta Christian en route to a fourth place team finish at the Area Tournament – the first time Union has placed at Area.

Overall, the Panthers placed 10-of-14 wrestlers at Area, and all were underclassmen. The future is bright for Union County Wrestling Coach Michael Smith-Foot. This upcoming year, the Panthers will hit the mat with just one senior on the roster, Zach Payton at 220 pounds.

To be continued in next week's edition of the North Georgia News.

NASCAR 2016

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Logano Powers to Michigan Win

Brooklyn, MI - Joey Logano got a jump on the rest of the field during the race's last restart on lap 192 and went on to score his first Sprint Cup win of the season, leading 138 laps of the 200-lap race.

Logano, the polesitter, along with all the other drivers had to fight a new aerodynamics package, NASCAR had instituted just for this race. The restarts were especially difficult, with cars bunched up and sliding as they entered the turns.

Logano was among the first to learn the handling of the NASCAR-mandated smaller spoilers and splitters, along with other items that had been changed. All drivers had more slipping and sliding, which made for harder to handle driving conditions.

"I'll remember that one for sure," Logano said in victory lane. "What a crazy race with the low downforce, more cautions and more chances to screw up. There were times I wasn't sure what the car was going to do. The team kept telling me how good we were doing, but I wasn't sure about whether the car would do what I needed it to."

Chase Elliott continues to push for his first Sprint Cup win. He led 38 laps on the way to a runner-up finish.

Kyle Larson was third, with Brad Keselowski, Kevin Harvick, Carl Edwards, Tony Stewart, Austin Dillon, Jamie McMurray, and Kurt Busch finishing out the top-10.

Jimmie Johnson, who finished 16th slapped the outside wall and blamed it on Trevor Bayne.

Dale Earnhardt Jr. got tangled up in a wreck that involved AJ Allmendinger and Chris Buescher during lap 61, and could not continue. He was credited with a 39th place finish.

Earnhardt was attempting to shoot the gap between the cars of Allmendinger on his outside and Chris Buescher on the inside when Buescher appeared to slide up into Earnhardt's No. 88. That was all it took to set off a chain reaction, as Earnhardt's car immediately got loose and into the No. 47 of Allmendinger – sending both cars hard into the outside wall.

Earnhardt then spun and slid down the track before taking his heavily-damaged car to the garage. He blamed Buescher for the incident and was not too happy about it.

"We've got a responsibility to take care of each other when we're three-wide, so I'm disappointed in that," Earnhardt said. "We had a pretty good car and we were just kind of taking our time. The car was great, so it's a

shame." Kyle Busch lost an engine in his car and was the first driver out of the race (40th).

Tony Stewart's sixth-place finish was his best of the season.

Top-10 leaders after 15 of 36: 1. Harvick-526, 2. Kurt Busch-496, 3. Keselowski-480, 4. Edwards-472, 5. Logano-455, 6. Elliott-453, 7. Johnson-441, 8. Truex-433, 9. Kyle Busch-417, 10. Kenseth-409.

SUAREZ GETS FIRST XFINITY CAREER WIN

Daniel Suárez won Saturday's Xfinity race at Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn, Michigan, to become the first Mexican-born driver to capture a NASCAR national series victory. With the victory, Suárez becomes only the fifth Latino driver to win a NASCAR national series race, joining Frank Mundy, Juan Pablo Montoya, Aric Almirola and Nelson Piquet Jr.

Suarez was determined that his teammate Kyle Busch was not going to win his fifth series race of the year. He pulled around Busch with two laps remaining in the 125-lap race to win by .028-seconds.

"Honestly, I was trying as hard as possible," Suarez said. "I was driving a little more on the edge. Honestly, I was maybe risking a little more than I should have. Everything was about the win so I was trying as hard as possible and it seemed like we were good in points, but not very good in wins. I was just very hungry and I know this team was at the same spot, we were very hungry to win races and finally we got the first one."

When asked how it felt to pass Kyle Busch, his teammate, Suarez replied, "Well, definitely Kyle has been super helpful to me, not just in the XFINITY Series but as well in the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series. Since last year, he started to support me a lot, to give me information, advice, so many different kinds of information just to try to be a little bit more prepared."

"Last year I went to more than 80 per cent of the racetracks for first time. He was super helpful. This year hasn't been the exception. He has been super helpful as well. We share a lot of information. He's just been a good friend. I can call him a good friend."

Busch finished second, followed by Paul Menard, Erik Jones, Elliott Sadler, Joey Logano, Alex Bowman, Justin Allgaier, Darrell Wallace Jr., and Brandon Jones.

Top-10 leaders after 13 of 33: 1. Suarez-452, 2. Sadler-434,



Joey Logano

3. T. Dillon-416, 4. E. Jones-397, 5. Allgaier-388, 6. B. Jones-388, 7. Gaughan-386, 8. Poole-373, 9. Wallace-340, 10. Reed-301.

BYRON GETS TEXAS TRUCK RACE

William Byron won Friday night's Texas truck race after taking the lead from Matt Crafton with five laps to go.

"It's huge," said Byron, who drives for Kyle Busch Motorsports. "For our race team to get another win this year really solidifies us. We didn't leave any doubt out there that we deserved to win."

Matt Crafton, who held on for second, led 133 laps of the 167-lap race, but was unable to withstand the late charge by Byron.

Johnny Sauter was third, and then Ben Kennedy, Tyler Reddick, Timothy Peters, John Nemecek, German Quiroga, Rico Abreu, and Daniel Hemric were the remaining top-10 drivers.

Top-10 leaders after 7 of 23: 1. Crafton-194, 2. Peters-176, 3. Byron-171, 4. Hemric-168, 5. Nemecek-153, 6. Reddick-153, 7. Sauter-151, 8. Gallagher-145, 9. Kennedy-142, 10. R. Truex-129.

MORE RULES CHANGES

There is an old saying among NASCAR teams, that if you don't like the rules, just wait, and there will be some new ones next week.

That was exactly the case after the Charlotte race on May 29. One week later, after the June 5th Pocono race weekend, NASCAR issued a second aerodynamic package to further reduce downforce and sideforce for this past weekend's Michigan race.

The bad part about an abrupt rule change isn't the rule itself, but how quickly teams must make adjustments. In the case of NASCAR's two latest changes, teams had only three days to prepare. As a result, several teams had problems getting their cars to pass qualifying prior to practice at Michigan.

"It's different from what it was, no doubt," said Jack Roush, who has three Cup teams. "No-

body had been on the race track with this package before. Everybody is struggling to find out where the sensitive adjustments are. The car has not been as loose as we expected. We thought that the problem would be flying out from underneath of you, loose on exit and entry. The entry has been a little bit of a problem, but the exit and center has not been a bigger problem than normal.

"The cars have gone from 3,000 pounds of downforce in 2014 to 2,700 last season, then 2,000 for the 2016 season before yet another reduction to 1,500 for MIS.

"It's a big turn and it's also disappointing to me that they decided to pick one of the races that I consider to be pivotal to my year and not make such a jump ball out of it. I wish they had left the rules the same and give us a practice session somewhere to really evaluate them, or a test session, but they decided to use the race to do it, so we'll have to see what we can get."

Roush's three teams finished 15th, 19th, and 29th at Michigan. They did not lead any laps.

Weekend Racing: The Trucks and Xfinity teams are at the seven-eighths mile Newton, Iowa facility. The Sprint Cup teams have an off week.

Sat., June 18; Truck Series race 8 of 23; Starting time: 8:30 p.m. ET; TV: Foxsports1.

Sun., June 19; Xfinity Series race 14 of 33; Starting time: 1:30 p.m. ET; TV: Foxsports1.

Racing Trivia Question: What year did the Iowa Speedway open?

Last Week's Question? The Wood Brothers team won the first NASCAR race held at Michigan in 1969. Who was the driver? Answer: It was Cale Yarborough.

You may contact the Racing Reporter by e-mail at: hodges@race500.com. N(0615)Z7CA

Bowling Scores

Young At Heart Seniors: Ron Wingate 209, Dewey Allen 199, 220, 202, 621 Series, Ken Thigpen 215, Stanley Tyler 231, Claudia Harrison 200, Bob Landis 237, 225, 223, 685 Series, Jim Kidder 233.

Summer Solar Fun Youth: Nick Love 132, Sabrina Willis 122, Michaela Caldwell 150, Kiley Hartness 60, Cooper Boyle.

Thursday Night Summer Mixed: Stanley Tyler 200, 202, Tony Lynch 214, 201, Jeb Plott 210, Michael Whitehead 201, Tee Turner 218, Tim McVay 213. N(0615)Z6Jg

Football and cheerleading registration ends June 24

Sign-ups at the Union County Recreation Department are coming to an end on June 24th.

Football registration fee: \$100
Cheerleading registration fee: \$105

Please note that our website is currently down so come by our office to register! (310 Wellborn St.)

**For more information call the Recreation office at 706-439-6074

Apply now for Run Above the Clouds Scholarship

To Woody Gap 2016 graduates and those who are currently in the ongoing scholarship process with The Run Above The Clouds: This is notification that applications are now being accepted for the 2016/2017 school year.



Applications are available at the Suches Community Center which is normally open on Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 10 AM till noon.

If you are unable to pick up an application or have ques-

tions, please contact Ruth Ann Miner at (706)747-5434.

Please note that the deadline for providing completed applications is June 25, 2016. N(0615)A1SH

TUCKER'S BASKETBALL CAMP

Union County High School

June 20-23, 2016

David Tucker

106 Sherwood Ave.

Box 26

Calhoun, TN 37309

(423) 336-3045

Union County High School is hosting a basketball skills camp for boys and girls K-12th grade. The camp will begin daily at 8:30 a.m. and end at 11:30 a.m. Every camper will receive a camp T-shirt. There will be an awards ceremony on Thursday at 11 a.m. The cost for each camper will be \$60. You may bring this form and money on June 20th, or mail this form and money to David Tucker at the address above.

David Tucker - Union County Panthers Head Girls Coach
Junior Tucker - Walker Valley High School
Jon Tucker □ Polk County High School
Mandy Hunter □ Union County Panthers
Ray Stone - Tennessee Wesleyan Basketball
Lane Colwell □ Union County High School

Activities will include: Ball handling drills, dribbling drills, shooting drills, offense and defense instruction, contests, 5-on-5 play, 3-on-3 play, and one-on-one play.

Camper's Name _____ Grade _____

Shirt Size _____ Do you have health insurance on this child? Yes _____ No _____

Emergency Contact _____ Phone # _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____