

Sports

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From Sweet to Elite: Union thumps Lamar to reach Elite 8

By Todd Forrest
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Barnesville - Last week, the Union County Lady Panthers softball team entered their Class AA Sweet 16 matchup at Lamar County desperate for a berth in the Elite 8.

During the latter years of the last decade, it looked as if the Lady Panthers would become regulars in Columbus, but that was not the case.

Last year, Union had the Wesleyan Lady Wolves in a 1-game-to-nothing hole in the Sweet 16 but saw the home team rally for two straight thanks to outstanding defensive play from the Lady Wolves outfield.

Fast-forward a year later, and the Lady Panthers are on the road in the Sweet 16, seeking that elusive Elite 8 appearance that has haunted the program since they were upset in the first round of the 2011 State Tournament.

Would Union continue to gradually improve its post-season performance as they have done since 2012, or would they reach their ceiling?

The answer was a resounding, 'NO.'

In Game One, the Lady Panthers took Lamar County out behind the woodshed for a 14-5 shellacking, that saw Union blow things wide open with two runs in the sixth and six more in the seventh.

As expected, junior Laken Chambers got the nod for the Lady Panthers, but in the second inning, she reagravated a lingering ankle injury that almost got her pulled from the game.

But the Union County ace had her ankle taped and went back out on the field, doing her impersonation of Curt Schilling in Game 6 of the 2004 American League Championship Series, the game that will be remembered as the 'bloody sock' game.

Like Schilling, she fought through the pain and continued



Sophomore Jillian Lawn delivered in the clutch for Union in Game Two at Lamar County. She picked up the win from the circle while driving in the game-tying run with her bat. She also recorded two RBIs in Game One. Photo/Todd Forrest

getting outs, and eventually, the Lady Panthers' bats gave her a three-run cushion, and then a nine-run cushion to work with.

Chambers picked up her 18th win of the season, firing a complete game, allowing 4 earned runs, striking out three, while not allowing a walk.

At the plate, Chambers was 2-for-4 with a double and 2 RBIs. Kendra Tanner went 4-for-4 with 4 runs and 3 RBIs. While Karley Nix finished 2-for-5 with 2 runs, 2 RBIs, and a triple.

Jillian Lawn went 1-for-3 and knocked in two runs. Aladriel Arnold finished 2-for-3 with 3 runs, a double, and an RBI.

The second game saw Lamar County take the lead,

for a moment, before the Lady Panthers restored order with a 5-3 victory.

With Chambers battling injury, Coach Stewart went to Lawn in Game Two, and the sophomore led her team to its first Elite 8 appearance in 5 years.

Lawn struck out six in 7 innings of work while giving up one walk and one earned run.

Lydia Arrowood was 2-for-4 at the plate, with a double, and a pair of runs scored.

Nix went 1-for-3 and scored twice, while Tanner and Chambers were each 1-for-4.

After Lamar took a 3-2 lead midway through the third, the Lady Panthers tied it back up at 3-all.

Chambers singled and



Junior leadoff hitter Kendra Tanner tormented Lamar County's pitching with a 4-for-4 day at the plate in Game One, sparking Union's 14-5 victory. Photo/Todd Forrest



Junior Lydia Arrowood recorded two hits and scored two runs in Game Two making her the only Lady Panther with a multi-hit game during the narrow 5-3 win. Photo/Todd Forrest

Logan Seabolt entered as a pinch runner and advanced to third on a pair of wild pitches, setting the table for Lawn, who drove in the game-tying run with a base hit.

Union tacked on another in the fifth when Maddie Garrett

drew a bases loaded walk.

In the sixth, Nix walked and advanced on a wild pitch, then Lawn hit a grounder to third that was mishandled, allowing Nix to score on the error.

In the seventh inning,



Laken Chambers pitched 5-plus innings with an injured ankle in Game One. Photo/Todd Forrest

Lawn sat down Lamar 1-2-3 to punch the Lady Panthers' ticket to Columbus.

Their first game will be Thursday against the top-ranked team in Class AA, Gordon Lee at 2:00 in Columbus.

Pickleball tourney to benefit Towns Co. Food Pantry still accepting players

By Todd Forrest
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Hiawassee - The sport with a funny name that has taken Northeast Georgia by storm looks as if it's here to stay.

Last month, more than 50 players participated in the 2015 Georgia Mountain Pickleball Classic that was held at the newly renovated, 14-court Towns County Pickleball Complex.

Players from as far away as Indiana made the trip to play in the tournament. Several counties from within Georgia were represented, as well as communities in the neighboring states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Florida.

Now Hiawassee's Greg Wilson is taking advantage of the sports' increasing popularity to benefit a worthy cause - the Towns County Food Pantry. And with the holidays right around the corner, making sure every family has a meal should

be a priority, and the food pantry can't do it without help from the community.

The tournament is slated for Nov. 7th, however the deadline to register is fast approaching with this Friday, Oct. 30th being the last day to enter. The entry fee is \$20 and the proceeds go to the food pantry.

There's more than one way to register and the simplest way is to pick up a form at Benchmark Physical Therapy, which is next door to Mary's Southern Grill, between Young Harris and Hiawassee. You can also visit www.fallpickleballtournament.blogspot.com where the registration and waiver forms can both be found.

The tournament is open to everyone of all skill levels, but there is no need to worry if you're a newb, the competition will be split into two separate brackets - one for beginners, and another for the more practiced pickleballers.

The tournament will be a round-robin format and you will be teamed up with a different

partner in each match. According to Wilson, that allows everyone to play an equal amount of games and whichever players have the highest point total will be declared the winner.

At the conclusion of the tournament, instead of trophies going to the winners, many local businesses are chipping in to create gift bags for the Top 3 players from each level.

"All of the local businesses have been very helpful and we're going to have a great time," Wilson said.

For the remaining few who haven't heard about Pickleball, the game is similar to badminton, ping-pong, racquetball, or tennis.

The pickleball court is similar to a doubles badminton court. The actual size of the court is 20x44 feet for both doubles and singles. The net is hung at 36 inches on the ends, and 34 inches in the middle. The court is striped like a tennis court, with no alleys; but the outer courts, and not the inner courts, are divided in

half by service lines. The inner courts are non-volley zones and extend 7 feet from the net on either side.

The ball is served with an underhand stroke so that contact with the ball is made below waist level in an upward arc from behind the baseline, diagonally to the opponent's service zone. The player must exit the non-volley zone before playing a volley. The first side scoring 11 points and leading by at least two points wins.

Points are scored by the serving side only and occur when the opponent faults (fails to return the ball, hits ball out of bounds, steps into the non-volley zone [the first seven feet from the net, also known as the 'kitchen'] in the act of volleying the ball, etc.). A player may enter the non-volley zone to play a ball that bounces and may stay there to play balls that bounce

If you have any questions regarding next month's pickleball tournament, you may call (706) 896-2771.

PUTTING HUNGER "IN A PICKLE"

First Annual Fall Pickleball Tournament

All Proceeds Benefit The Towns County Food Pantry

DATE/TIME:	November 7, 2015 10:00am Start (9:15am Check-In/Registration)	PLACE:	-Doubles - Round Robin Style -Tournament-(Total Points Scored) -All Ages Welcome -Beginner and Intermediate Divisions -Cost: \$20 Per Player -Make up date if adverse weather: November 14
REGISTRATION DEADLINE:	OCTOBER 30, 2015		
REGISTRATION FORMS AVAILABLE AT BENCHMARK PHYSICAL THERAPY IN YOUNG HARRIS FOR QUESTIONS CALL (706)896-2771			

Pride of the Mountains band impressive at Hartwell

Hartwell - Earlier this month, the Union County High School Pride of the Mountains Marching Band traveled to Hart County to participate in the Lake Hartwell Marching Festival where they received seven "Superior" ratings and

came in first place in the Silver Division, and in Class AA.

The Union County Drum Majors, Majorettes, Color Guard, Band One, Band Two, and Band Three received "Superior" ratings.

They also received an

overall "Superior" rating.

The Pride of the Mountains' percussion section received an "Excellent" rating.

The majorettes and the color guard were both second in their class.

The Pride of the Moun-

tains Band will honor its seniors this Friday night when the Panthers football team hosts Riverside Military Academy for Senior Night.

The Pride of the Mountains band is under the direction of Will Stafford.



Don't Be Left Out!

9-12 Year Old Basketball Registration ends THIS WEEK for the Union County Recreation Department.

Register in the Recreation Office or Online at mexkspark.com before October 30th.

For more information call the Recreation Office at

706-439-6074.