

# Golf: Lady Panthers pull off the "three-peat"

By Todd Forrest  
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ROYSTON - The Union County Lady Panthers are hoping the third time is the charm following their third consecutive Area/Region title when they compete in the State Tournament later this month.

Last Thursday, Union County claimed the three-peat with a 259 overall score, securing its spot in the State Tournament, where they've been in the mix for a state title in each of the last three years.

At Area, the Lady Panthers were led by senior Ally Horinek's 81 - the second lowest overall score of the day.

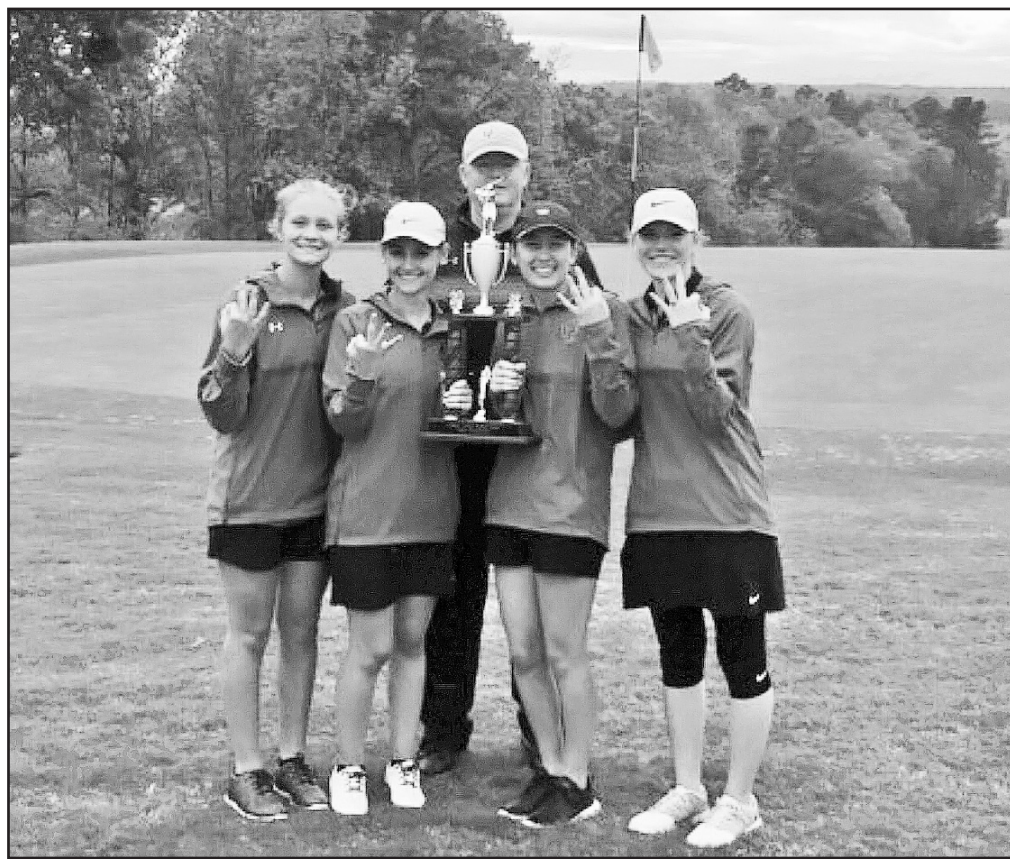
Grace Wischmeyer fired an 87, Megan Rowe shot a 91, and Carson Chambers turned in a 102.

According to Union County golf coach Greg Chambers, his team had the three-peat on its list of goals, but it wasn't something they publicized.

"I know it was something they wanted to achieve, but they didn't talk about it a great deal," Chambers said. "They knew how special and difficult it is to win a championship three years in a row, especially when you have a bullseye on your back, so I know that was something that they wanted to achieve for their school and community and they did it."

The State Tournament will be hosted by Catechee Golf Course in Hartwell on May 21-22, and while Chambers currently likes where his team is, he's confident they can find another gear over the coming weeks.

"I do believe that we are finally starting to get into a routine of practicing and play-



The Union County Lady Panthers golf team (L-R) Grace Wischmeyer, Megan Rowe, Ally Horinek, and Carson Chambers pose with their third straight Area/Region Championship trophy on Thursday.

ing golf," he said. "I like how we are starting to play, but we know we still have a lot that we can improve on before May 21 and 22."

"This was a very difficult season from a weather standpoint. We had a number of canceled practices and matches, but since spring break it's been better and we've been able to play more."

"We still have work to do because the state tournament is a 36-hole tournament and we need to be in shape mentally and physically, but I like our focus right now."

As for Union County's three seniors, this is their fourth State Tournament and it comes

on the heels of three near-misses.

In 2015, they placed third at state before finishing as the Class AA State Runner-Up in 2016 and again in Class AAA last year. According to Chambers, that valuable experience is what stands out about this year's squad and what he believes could finally get them over the top.

"They seem pretty relaxed, but focused on the opportunity that's ahead of them," he said. "They have all been playing a long time and having three seniors is a plus for us with all they have been exposed to over the last 4 years."

"All of the seniors have

their future plans already set, so other than exams and graduating on May 25, their focus will be golf. Ally (Horinek) will be attending Georgia Tech in the fall; Megan (Rowe) will be attending Columbus State to play golf and Grace (Wischmeyer) will be attending Maryville College in Tennessee to play golf."

"We have traveled all over the state of Georgia and played in tournaments and matches from Dalton to the Okefenokee Swamp. They have competed against the largest and best teams in the state. They have all been apart of the previous teams, so I think their experience and maturity is the main thing that stands out to me



Senior Ally Horinek was Union County's individual low medalist with an 81 - good enough for second place overall.

this year."

Something else that could benefit Union County this season is the State Tournament is finally in North Georgia after a few years in extreme South Georgia.

The 2-3 hour ride instead of a 6-8 hour ride is a huge plus, not to mention the fact that the hilly and mountainous terrain could give the North Georgia teams an advantage over their South Georgia counterparts. Although, Chambers is quick to point out that none of that matters if they don't play up to their potential.

"I think the tournament in North Georgia will be helpful to us, but at the end of the day

it will come down to execution on those two days at Catechee, which is a difficult golf course. But we will definitely take a two-hour drive over a six-plus hour drive.

"I am just very proud of Ally, Megan, Grace, and Carson," he added. "They have won many matches and championships for UCHS the last four years and they have represented their community very well."

"They are all excellent students, but most of all, they are all great people. I will miss this team. They have just one more thing to accomplish on May 21 and 22 and I know these four ladies will be ready."



Senior Grace Wischmeyer at a recent match.



Senior Megan Rowe at a recent match.



Junior Carson Chambers at Area

## Wrestling: Nelson signs with Life



Bryan Nelson with family and a future coach at his signing last week at UCHS. Photo/Todd Forrest

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Bryan Nelson became the first Union County wrestler to receive a college scholarship when he signed with Life University last Wednesday at UCHS.

"This is our seventh year with a (wrestling) program and (Nelson) is the first college signee that we've had," Union County coach Justin Byers said prior to the signing. "Hopefully he will start a path that many young men will follow down. He's been with this program since middle school and we've watched him grow, and not only mature as a wrestler, but mature as a young man and we couldn't be prouder."

Meanwhile, fellow Union County wrestling coach Michael Smith-Foot praised Nelson's commitment.

"He's been with us for seven years so (Life) can rest assured that he'll stick with the program," he said. "These college coaches don't want to waste their time on someone who'll be one-semester-and-out. (Nelson) could have easily bailed on us but he stuck with it and is one of the few seniors that actually stayed with the program."

"He played football and works with his father but he always finds the time to come back and work with the younger kids," Smith-Foot added. "Hopefully, now, he can come back and shed some insight on the differences between college and high school wrestling."

According to Nelson, it was Life's chiropractic program that first caught his attention, then the positives only continued to snowball after he discovered their wrestling program.

"Back in 10th grade I noticed Life while I was looking at chiropractic schools," Nelson said. "They also have a fantastic wrestling team so I've been interested in them for about three years now."

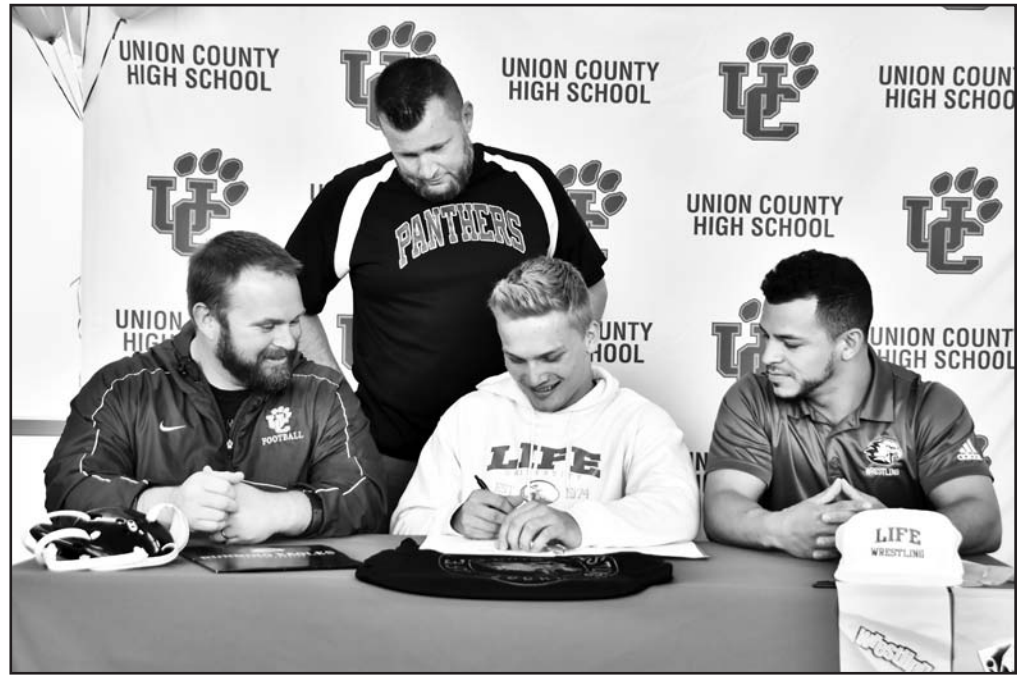
It wasn't until this past year that Life's Wrestling program began to also take a serious interest in the Union County senior, but once they did, Nelson was immediately sold.

According to Nelson, he hopes to wrestle at 180 pounds at the next level but that could change. When asked where he sees himself in four years, his answer was short and simple.

"Wherever the Lord wants me," he replied.

As far as goals for his freshman year, he wants to keep his focus on becoming a better wrestler and teammate.

"I just want to get better and do what I can to make the



Bryan Nelson signs alongside his former high school and his future college coach. Photo/Todd Forrest

team better," Nelson said.

In closing, Nelson gave thanks to those who have

helped him on his journey.

"I want to thank my family, my coaches, and team-

mates, but most of all I want to thank God for giving me this opportunity."