

# Sports

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## Local All-American Beck Burnette qualifies for U.S. Amateur golf tourney

Lee University golf season begins Sept. 13 for two-time All-American, 2020 Freshman of the Year

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Local amateur golfer Beck Burnette is quietly making a name for himself as one of Blairsville's most storied athletes. And he's only 20 years old.

A two-time All-American at Cleveland, Tennessee's Lee University, Burnette padded an already impressive resume this summer when he qualified for the United States Golf Association's (USGA) U.S. Amateur Tournament in Oakmont, Pennsylvania on Aug. 9-15.

Burnette earned a spot in the nation's oldest and most prestigious amateur golf tournament by firing a 10-under-par 134 over two rounds at Rome's Stonebridge Golf Course on July 20-21. Burnette claimed the tournament's fifth and final qualifying spot, turning in a 4-under-par 68 on day one to enter the final round tied for second with 10 other golfers, two shots off the lead. While his day-two 66 wasn't enough to catch the eventual winner (Ross Steelman of Columbia, Missouri), it did, however, allow Burnette to inch ahead of the pack and finish 36 holes one stroke ahead of the sixth-place cutoff.

Burnette cut a second-round eagle at the par-5 14th to propel himself into the top five. Then a birdie on the 17th, also a par-5, secured his spot in Pennsylvania.

"Without the support of my parents, I wouldn't have seen anywhere close to the success that I've had," Burnette said. "I owe so much of my success to them for not only getting me going but for supporting me throughout my journey."

"My coach from Lee [John Maupin] deserves a lot of credit for keeping me on the right path. There were a few slip-ups here and there, but like any college student will have, but he's always been there for me."



Lee junior Beck Burnette enters his third year as the Gulf South Conference's top men's golfer. Photo/Jonathan Murray

Hosted by Oakmont Country Club (along with the Long Vue Club in Verona, Pennsylvania), Burnette began the 2021 U.S. Amateur tourney with a 2-over 72 during round one of stroke play before ultimately missing the cut with a 78 in round two.

His opening round hit a few bumps on the front nine, most notably a pair of bogeys on the 376-yard par-4 sixth hole and the 459-yard, par-4 ninth. Sitting at 4-over with four holes remaining, Burnette turned it on, closing the round with two birdies, starting at the par-5 15th before punctuating day one with a 3 on the par-4 18th.

Burnette couldn't settle into a rhythm during an up-and-down second day despite birdies on the par-5 fifth and 12th holes. He made the turn coming off a double-bogey 6 at No. 9, then completed the event with a 6 at the 18th.

Now, with his college

season opening at the Kiawah Invitational on Sept. 13, Burnette is preparing to take a leap forward during the 2021-22 season at Lee University, where the communications major is a two-time second-team All-American and a Phil Mickelson Division 2 Freshman of the Year recipient.

"I have to admit that last season was a bit of a letdown," Burnette said in regards to not reaching First Team All-American status. "It wasn't that I didn't work as hard or anything like that, it just felt like there was a bit of a slip [in my game]. So I definitely have my sights set on becoming one of those top 10 or 12 players in the country that make [First Team All-American]."

After just two years in college, Burnette is already the first player in school history to earn two All-America nods. Additionally, he is just the third Flames golfer to qualify for the U.S. Amateur.



A multi-sport athlete from a young age, Burnette turned his attention solely to golf in middle school and won his first competitive tournament by age 14. Photo/Reily Rogers

During the 2020-21 campaign, Burnette led the men's golf program to a conference title and a National Championship appearance.

Burnette chose the Gulf South Conference school over Liberty and Samford after realizing early on that his future resides in the gentleman's game.

"Around the end of middle school, I just stopped playing other sports, like baseball and basketball," he said. "Then about halfway through my sophomore was when I started to break out and play pretty well and get noticed by some [college] coaches."

Burnette played his first golf tournament at six years old but didn't enter the larger competitive events until he turned 11. His first multi-day tournament victory came at 14 years old, which marked his first time shooting under par during competition.

Reflecting on the win,

Burnette said, "I played with the final group, made a bunch of birdies and ended up winning. That was a very special day."

Despite his nationwide success, the homeschool graduate has remained true to his north Georgia roots.

"I spend a lot of time at Butternut Creek [Golf Course] and I worked there the last two summers," he said. "But I play Old Union, Brasstown Valley and everywhere I can locally. I'm usually somewhere around Blairsville playing or practicing whenever I'm home."

After college, Beck Burnette hopes to ride his ball-striking ability as far as it will take him.

"As long as possible, that's the best way to put it," he said when asked how long he plans on remaining involved in the sport. "I would like to see how far I can go, but I don't have a specific route planned or anything like that."

If the time comes when a future in competitive golf is no longer [an option], I would definitely like to remain in the golf field."

The 2021-22 college season begins in Kiawah Island, South Carolina where Lee will face USC-Aiken on Sept. 13-14. The fall season concludes on Oct. 25 at the Atlanta National Invitational. The season will resume in the spring before concluding in May.

While majoring in communications, Burnette is pursuing a minor in business. He is the son of Rod and Dawn Burnette and is believed to be only the first or second golfer from Union County to compete in the U.S. Amateur.

His other awards include 2021 All-South Region, 2021 All-GSC First Team, 2021 GSC All-Academic Team, 2021 GSC Honor Roll, 2020 All-South Region First Team and 2020 GSC Honor Roll.

## Online registration underway for Upward Basketball and Cheer

On-line registration for Upward Basketball and Cheerleading is now open for boys and girls in grades Kindergarten through 8th Grade at [www.hopb.org](http://www.hopb.org). Registration price to participate in basketball or cheerleading is \$50. If needed, weekly payment plans are available. Practices will take place once a week and they begin the week of September 27th, while games will be held on consecutive Saturdays between October 16th and November 20th.

Everyone is encouraged to attend the evaluation. It will be held on Thursday evening, September 16th on a drop-in basis, anytime between 5:30 and 7:00 P.M. in the gym at the House of Prayer Family Life Center. Form and registration fees may also be dropped off, Monday through Thursday, at the House of Prayer offices in the Family Life Center between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. For more info, contact the church

office at HOP (706) 745-5925.

Established in 1995, Upward Sports is the world's largest Christian youth sports provider designed to give children and their families a positive sports experience by partnering with local churches to share God's love, build character, and teach the basic knowledge of a sport.

It remains unique by providing a substitution system that ensures every young athlete plays, and only requires a one 1 hour practice each week with one game per week. We recognize the value of each child by offering a safe environment where every participant gets equal playing time in games & an opportunity to get to know Jesus Christ. We believe that it's a race to the heart of every child, and the first one there, wins. Won't you join us in our eternal pursuit? More information regarding Upward Sports can be found online at [www.upward.org](http://www.upward.org).

## Trout stocking sites week of August 23-27, 2021

Fannin: Rock Creek and Toccoa River Tailwaters (below Lake Blue Ridge Dam)  
Union: Cooper Creek

Note: Information is subject to change. Please call the hatchery at 706-838-4723 for questions. Stay up-to-date with stocking and events through Facebook [www.facebook.com/chatthoocheeforest-mh](https://www.facebook.com/chatthoocheeforest-mh). The hatchery also provides trout for the state. Please contact Georgia DNR for information on sites stocked by the state.



Beck Burnette at a recent Lee University match. Photo/Jonathan Murray



Beck Burnette at the U.S. Amateur. Photos courtesy of Jackson Burks

# UCHS Softball honors local educators at Teacher Appreciation Night

Storms roll through during pregame teacher ceremony, washes out evening contest vs. Fannin

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Between COVID-19 and torrential rains, the Union County Lady Panthers softball team received some unexpected time off last week.

With COVID concerns forcing Union to back out of a weekend tournament in Winder, Thursday's Teacher Appreciation Night contest vs. Fannin County became the week's lone remaining matchup. However, heavy rains and high winds moved across campus during the pregame festivities, leaving players, teachers and fans scrambling for cover mid-ceremony.

As everyone sought shelter from the deluge, UCHS public address announcer Chris Mathis continued the event, revealing each senior's favorite teacher to the scattering of fans throughout the softball complex.

Below is the transcript of the ceremony, where each of Union County's nine seniors recognized their favorite teacher and why they were selected. Additionally, a bit of background info was provided for each honored educator.

After Mathis requested all teachers in attendance stand for applause, the ceremony got underway with dark clouds bearing down on the school.

"The senior softball players would like to recognize a few of the teachers that made their journey through Union County High School a more memorable one," Mathis read.

Caley Davis chose Mrs. Dixie Conger.

"Dixie is in her eighth year teaching biology at UCHS. Her students are truly the reason she loves teaching. They inspire her every day to not only be a better teacher, but also a better person.

"Caley chose Mrs. Conger because she makes learning fun and enjoyable. She helped Caley find her passion for the career she wants to pursue after high school. She has also been a good friend and mentor outside of the classroom."

Emily Byers selected Mrs. Beth McKeever.

"Mrs. McKeever is entering her 23rd year of teaching English. The reason she began teaching is the same reason that keeps her going now. Even while times are difficult in our society, the kids keep her going. The [students'] warmth and smiling faces keep her coming back every year. She is very proud of how flexible and positive they have been throughout these past couple of years. She feels truly



Union County softball seniors recognize their favorite and most influential teachers during a pregame ceremony on Thursday, Aug. 26. Photo/Todd Forrest

fortunate to have been raised and work in these mountains.

"When asked to choose a teacher to recognize on our teacher appreciation game night, Emily automatically knew the teacher she would recognize would be Mrs. McKeever.

"Coming in as a new student [her] sophomore year, she had the opportunity to have Mrs. McKeever as a teacher. It was the best thing Emily could have wished for. Instantly she fell in love with her class and the way she desired to teach and engage with each student so that they may grow.

"But most importantly, Mrs. McKeever's smile and warm enthusiastic personality she brings to her classroom and the hallway every day is what she admires the most. Not to mention the outstanding record-holding athlete she was. Therefore, Emily chose Mrs. McKeever to take a moment and appreciate the heartfelt teacher she is.

Lexi Sisum picked Mrs. Danya Nichols.

"Mrs. Nichols is in her 19th year of teaching at UCMS. She truly loves her school family of fellow teachers, students and staff. She loves encouraging students to reach their full potential and especially loves to watch them grow and achieve their goals throughout high school and beyond. Mrs. Nichols is honored to be recognized tonight and very proud of Lexi and her goal to be a teacher one day.

"Lexi hasn't had Mrs. Nichols as a teacher since middle school, but she has made a huge impact on [her] life. She has known her both in and out of school and she continues to prove that she's not only an

amazing teacher but an amazing mother. With that being said, she is someone [Sisum] continues to look up to and is a perfect example of a well-rounded woman."

Emma Roxbury chose Mrs. April Krieger

"Mrs. April Krieger has taught for 21 years, and 19 of those years she has spent teaching English at UCHS. She loves hearing from her students in her famous classroom discussions and seeing them become successful, proactive members of the school and their community. [Krieger] would especially like to thank Emma Roxbury and all the Lady Panthers softball team for [her] being recognized this afternoon."

Aubrie Banton selected Alicia Frizzell and Kelley Watkins.

"Mrs. Frizzell has been teaching for 21 years. She has three children and has been married for 20 years. Teaching is her passion and she loves her students.

"Mrs. Watkins has been a certified athletic trainer for five years. She taught sports medicine and healthcare for three years. Both teachers have had a major impact on not only Aubrie's academic success, but her life.

"Ms. Kelley provided the environment for her to explore the career she wants to pursue. As well as helped her recover from multiple injuries including the two or maybe three concussions. Beyond the technicalities, Ms. Kelley allowed Aubrie to have a safe place within the halls of UCHS [and thanks her for her] patience and kindness. [Kelley] means the world to [Banton].

As for Mrs. Frizzell, she

has always encouraged [Banton] that she can do better and excel in everything she does. Not only has she helped Aubrie excel in high school, but she has prepared her for the future and the college life she will soon explore.

"Mrs. Frizzell has been one of the best teachers she has had and made what she thought would be [her] worst subject her best, Chemistry. Mrs. Frizzell has made a huge impact on Aubrie's whole family from [her] brother to [her] cousins and for that she will forever be thankful."

Tori Tracy picked Mrs. Emily Cobb.

"Mrs. Cobb has been at Union County Schools for 14 years and currently teaches English. She enjoys teaching because of the relationships that she forms with her students. It is exciting to watch them mature and change into young men and women. Every year she finds that they teach her as much, if not more, than she teaches them.

"She enjoys teaching English because it gives students a voice. She gets the privilege of showing them that words are powerful and the ability to communicate effectively can help them reach their goals and dreams. She is honored to be here tonight.

"Tori chose Mrs. Emily Cobb, because not only has she always been a great teacher, but she is also works extremely hard outside the classroom and has always been someone she can go to when she needs her, no matter what."

Rebekah Chambers chose Lynn Deweese

"This is [Deweese's] eighth year at Union County

High School. This semester she is teaching Biology and AP Environmental Science. In the classroom, she enjoys getting to know her students and takes pride in their accomplishments. Several of these senior softball players have been in [her] homeroom for the past four years--these young ladies are highly motivated and destined to be successful in life because of their motivation to put their best efforts into any endeavor.

"While driving to and from Murphy where she lives, she often reflects and thinks of how blessed she is to be a teacher at Union County High School and looks forward to seeing the places [her students] will go.

"Rebekah chose Mrs. Deweese because every time she was tired after a game or not understanding an assignment, she always made sure to come up to her and ask if everything was okay and if she needed help with anything. She has been right there all four years to check on her every Wednesday in home room. [She is thankful to] Mrs. Deweese for everything [she does]."

Kaelyn Jones selected Mrs. Camie George.

"Mrs. Camie George is a mainstay at Union County High School, and it is well known that she is a great teacher and huge supporter of extracurricular activities. Mrs. George enjoys teaching and watching her students grow.

"Kaelyn chose Mrs. George because she made learning fun. Even when she wasn't in her class, Mrs. George was always willing to help her if she needed anything. She appreciates everything she has done for

her. She is a wonderful teacher and Kaelyn is thankful she got to be in her class."

Ansley Collins chose Mrs. Tammie Hughes.

"Ms. Tammie Hughes has worked for Union County schools for 25 years. She started as a kindergarten parapro, moved into special education and served as a para pro for two years. At that time she earned her teaching degree from Brenau University and was hired as a certified Special Education teacher.

"After a couple of years, she landed in fifth grade where she served as a teacher for the next 16 years where she had [Collins] as a student. For the last three years, she has had the privilege to serve as the assistant principal at Union County Primary School. She loves working at school. After 25 years she still loves talking with students, helping them master the skills they need to be successful, but also to have the opportunity to build them up and encourage them as they grow into amazing people.

"She is so blessed to have worked at a job that she loves for all of these years with such wonderful people. She is honored that Ansley chose her to escort her today. This [is] one of the highlights of [her] career with Union County Schools.

"Ansley chose her fifth grade teacher Tammy Hughes because she made learning fun, and Ansley always wanted to go to her class everyday. Mrs. Hughes is a great Christian lady and it was very evident that she loved all her students and was a great role model, and still is today. And by the way, [Hughes] is a great kickball player."



UCHS softball senior Lexi Sisum embraces UCMS teacher Danya Nichols. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Emma Roxbury and UCHS teacher April Krieger share a laugh. Photo/Todd Forrest

## Fundraiser soccer tourney: 'Legends' do it again



"The Legends" are a local soccer club consisting of former Union County players along with past and present Union County school employees. Each month during the offseason, a local 8 vs. 8 soccer tournament is hosted at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium to raise money for the Union County soccer program. "The Legends" have come out on top in each of the last two events.



L-R: Kaelyn Jones, Tammy Hughes and Ansley Collins try to laugh off the sudden downpour that spoiled the remainder of the ceremony and the evening's game vs. Fannin County. Photo/Todd Forrest