

# Sports

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## Lady Panthers fall at Wesleyan

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**Norcross** - The top ranked and six-time defending State Champion Wesleyan Lady Wolves (24-3) opened with a 24-12 edge after a quarter that turned into a 40-16 lead at the break.

Junior Lisa Nalaschi led the Lady Panthers (16-11) with 6 points in the season finale.

"The best team won but we gave a good effort, we fought, and played hard, but Wesleyan is a pretty good basketball team," Union Head Coach David Tucker said. "We missed some easy shots early and you can't do that against a team like that."

Earlier last week, Union County wrapped up the Region 8-AA Tournament with a 56-49 loss to Greene County to drop to fourth entering State.

Allie Stroman, Madison Rich, and Lauren Zollinger's high school career came to a close with four State Playoff trips on their resume, 68 wins, and a winning percentage of .613.

However, Union and Coach Tucker will return four starters next season and should feature plenty of experience with six seniors. Jefferson will be moving up to Class AAA, so you can expect for the Lady Panthers to be in the mix again.

"We gained a lot of experience at Wesleyan and during the season," Coach Tucker said. "We had a lot of inexperienced girls step up for us, and they will know what to expect next year. We had a sophomore and a freshman that had to do a lot and we still finished 16-11 and made the State Tournament so no complaints."

As for the 2014-15 season, there will be some changes made in Region 8-AA. Not only is Jefferson moving up but the seven teams (six girls teams), will play a full Region schedule. Unlike the past two years, everyone will play each other twice and both games will count toward the final standings.

"I'm looking forward to it and they are too," Coach Tucker said. "But after (Wesleyan) they've seen that they need to get a little bit quicker and we've got to have more confidence in ourselves."



Top to bottom: Allie Stroman, Madison Rich, and Lauren Zollinger. Union County's three seniors will go out as one of the most successful classes in school history. They reached four State Tournaments, won 68 games and twice reached the finals of the Battle of the States Christmas Tournament. They go out with four consecutive wins over Towns County and a near perfect 6-1 mark against Fannin County. Photos/Todd Forrest

## G.A.C. ends Panthers' season

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**Norcross** - On Friday, Union County (15-14) was faced with the daunting task of taking on the No. 11 team in the nation, and Greater Atlanta Christian (29-0) lived up to the hype.

With five players headed to Division I schools this fall, the unbeaten Spartans routed the Panthers 83-22.

"They could probably play with Young Harris," Union Head Coach Casey Jones said. "Young Harris is pretty good but (GAC) have five D-1 guys and a 6-7, 220 pounder coming off the bench. They are the best high school team that I've seen and if they don't win State, then I would like to see that team that beats them."

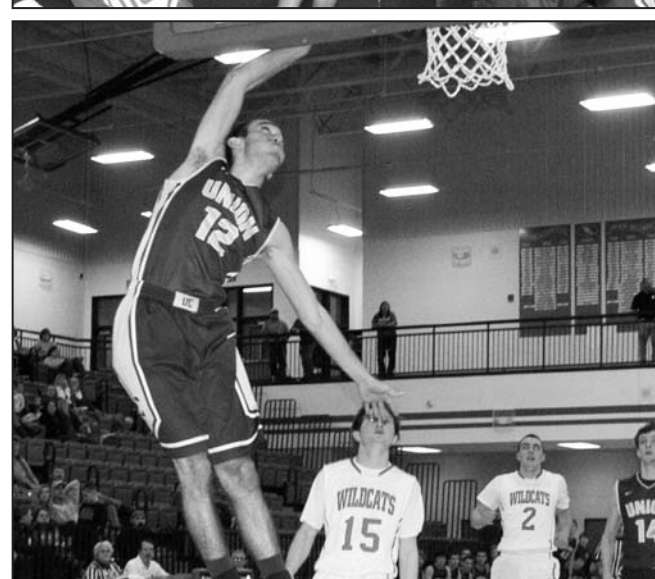
Junior Tyler Odom led the Panthers and scored half of his team's points with 11.

Trailing 25-9 after one, the Panthers were limited to just three points during the second half. GAC held a 50-19 lead at the break and a 72-22 lead after three quarters.

"I think (GAC) decided that 19 points was too much to allow at the half, so they turned it up a little bit in the second half," Coach Jones said. "They blocked a lot of shots and we had to try and adjust to that and it hurt our confidence. You don't get to 29-0, No. 11 in the country and No. 1 in the state without being pretty good. They aren't just talented. They are well coached and they get after it, they aren't lazy and very fundamentally sound."

But the Panthers can hold their heads high as they reached the State Tournament for just the second time since 2003, and the first since 2009. With only three seniors on this year's squad, Coach Jones believes that the GAC contest will only benefit his team down the road, and despite the blowout, it gave the Panthers three extra games and an extra week of practice, something you can only achieve by reaching State.

"I think it will help us understand how far we are from being a really good team," Coach Jones said. "We had a great season with 15 wins and making it to State. That's a good year for us based on our history, but I want us to set the bar a little bit higher than that. We want to make State and win a game. That will be our goal for next year. This year our goal was to make it to the tournament. I think



Top to bottom: Elijah Ryals, Grant Schuette (left), and Dylan Coyne. Union's three seniors have laid the groundwork by getting the Panthers back to the State Tournament. Photos/Todd Forrest

## Soccer season opens with split at Fannin Co.

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**Blue Ridge** - Both Union County soccer teams have some giant shoes to fill as they look to get back to the State Tournament in consecutive years.

Union County Head Coach Tim Hunter realizes that there will be some bumps in the road early on, but expects to have all of the wrinkles ironed out before postseason play begins.

The 2014 season began with mixed results as the Lady Panthers had little trouble in their 6-0 victory over Fannin, while the Panthers are still trying to replace more than 90 percent of its offense, and it showed in a 3-1 loss at Fannin.

Maddy Morlock provided the Lady Panther offense with a hat trick after Alyssa Arnold scored the first goal of the 2014 season. Rachel Vester made it a 5-0 game and Camryn Carter scored Union's sixth and final goal.

"The girls came out playing extremely well," Coach Hunter said. "We lost several seniors who were 4 year letterman and one who started every varsity game in high school so I didn't really know what to expect. We are ultimately a very young team as we only have three seniors, Erin Innis, Mary Murphy and Ema Herum. We are still a very young team but I couldn't be any prouder of how well we came together and played vs Fannin."

Innis recorded 2 assists in the contest and Murphy and Vester added one each.

"The one thing I did expect is, that we were going to play hard and pass the ball pretty well because we have done that all season in training," Coach Hunter said. "So I expected our team to get after it but I really didn't expect a lopsided outcome. Most of our games with Fannin are decided by one goal one way or the other, but we ended up winning 6-0."

Hunter was also impressed with the way his defense played in the shutout. Union had to replace keeper Ansley Gutierrez who was one of the leaders of the Lady Panther defense.

"Our defense played really well. We are much faster at



Head Soccer Coach Tim Hunter during the State Tournament at Manchester last May. Hunter is hoping that his teams will return to State this spring. Photos/Todd Forrest



Senior Erin Innis will be one of the three seniors on the Lady Panthers soccer team in 2014.

the back so we are able to play press defense this season," Coach Hunter said. "Ansley Garrison, Marissa Spaulding, Emma Smith, Katie Miller walked up way into Fannin's zone and basically never let the ball into our side of the field. And if it made it there, it didn't stay long."

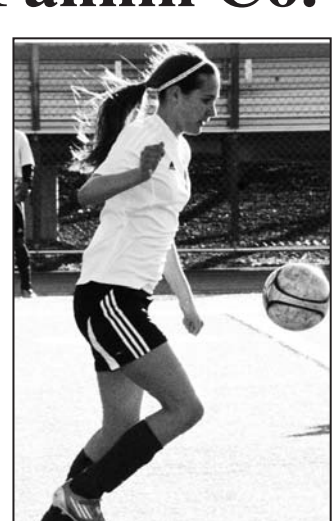
Meanwhile, the Panthers dropped their opener 3-1 to Fannin County.

A Jesus Mancillas goal right before the half tied things but Fannin added two second half goals to put Union away.

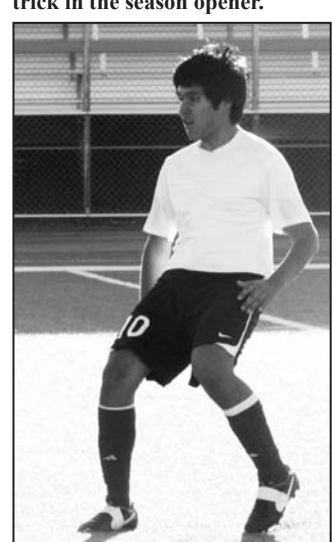
"The boys struggled a little in their opening game," Hunter said. "We had some varsity players, including one of our cap-

tains still in basketball so our young team went in really short handed.

"Our team looks very different from last year as we graduated several 4-year lettermen, including some players that you simply don't replace due to the skill and leadership that they brought to the team. Our Region's leading scorer is also no longer with the team and we are left with only one senior, Colton Stanley. I was adding up our goal scoring from last season and 92 percent of our goals were scored last season by players who we lost to graduation or are no longer with the team. So that leaves a huge question mark for our offense."



Maddy Morlock picked up a hat trick in the season opener.



Jesus Mancillas scored Union's lone goal at Fannin County.

Defensively, Union County held up pretty well against a quick Rebels' squad.

"Fannin was very fast at all spots and that put a lot of pressure on our defense who held up well," Hunter said. "They scored the opening goal of the game but I was really proud of how our kids didn't get their heads down and kept fighting."

"Ultimately I was pleased with our effort but not with the results. Our guys played really hard and gave a good effort but we didn't always play well. But at the same time, our average player on the field at any time is a sophomore, with many of them being freshmen."

Joe Collins

**Tips from the Range**

There is a split second of action that determines how your shot will turn out and that action is at the very top of the swing when the arms start their initial move down. This is the primary area that will allow the club to start on the proper path back to the ball, and if it isn't smooth and solid, the club head will be wrong at impact. It is vital that you allow the club to "fall" out of the top. Don't influence the initial drop with the hands in any way or you will create a bad path for the arms to follow. This is the most consistent flaw I see in amateurs and many don't even realize they are doing it. The top has to be correct to produce good shots consistently.

When we talk about the action we have out of the top of our swing, the one word that should come to mind is smooth. If you look at the great Tom Watson's swing you will notice that he starts his downswing before the arms finish their arc to the top. In other words, his weight transfer is headed toward his left side before the completion of the backswing. This movement makes his downswing very smooth because it allows his lower body to start the move to impact. Remember, this move to the front foot leads the weight transfer on the downswing and that is the key to swinging smoothly. There are two major reasons why the "move from the top" can get fouled up and the first is BALANCE! How many times have we talked about balance as a key to the proper swing? If the core of the swing tilts, then the club will follow a very negative path and you will not like the outcome. Typically it will be a pull. You need to feel as though you are leaning away and behind the ball at impact and that will guarantee your arms extend. This will also allow your lower body to begin the downswing. You must not do anything with your hands as the club starts its path to impact. If you are out of balance at the top, then you will need to cast your hands first to help reestablish your center of gravity on the downswing. This early release of the hands will also make you open your shoulders to soon, so make sure you are in a

good balanced position throughout the whole of your stance and swing. There is an interesting point that I would like to emphasize while talking about balance and the start of your downswing. Your arms weigh approximately ten pounds each. When you start your backswing, you will be swinging twenty pounds of active weight in motion to the top and then returning it to impact. That alone will pull you to your toes during the swing, and once you are on your toes, you will have to re-adjust your balance and WHAM, that rocking of the weight has made you swing bad out of the top and your shot is over, starting cussing cause most likely, "it ain't gonna' be pretty." You must stay in balance throughout the whole of the swing and not just at address. Most often times when you see a tour pro hit a shot offline, it was because his/her balance was bad. It is one of the biggest things they work on when looking at fundamental issues.

The second most popular error that affects the start of the downswing is the need to "hit" the ball instead of trusting the swing to do the work for us. This overwhelming desire to hit it hard is a good attribute but it has its place and time during the swing. It is natural for us to try and manipulate the speed of the club with our smaller muscles like those found in the hands and wrist because it feels better. The actual nerve endings are closer to the surface of our skin in those areas and give us direct feedback much quicker than the feelings we get from the bigger muscles. But, it is the larger muscle group that we must engage to achieve the best results and greatest distance. I have always said that with proper accuracy will come proper distance. The two go hand in hand when swinging correctly. This is why the pros can hit those long drives into really narrow fairways. To avoid this error, you must simply be in balance and let the body swing the club. Keep your grip pressure firm but don't squeeze the grip and allow the big muscles to control the action. Your hands and arms are along for the ride until just before impact when the lower hand can pour on the power. This will happen naturally if the weight transfer is correct and your head is behind impact. The great Ben Hogan said, "I hit the ball as hard as I can with my right hand but this action must wait until the club has left the top."