

Soccer seasons come to an end at GAC; standout Marissa Akin chooses Piedmont

By Todd Forrest
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Despite getting eliminated from the second round of the Class AA State Tournament by Greater Atlanta Christian, there was a silver lining to an otherwise sad week.

Senior Marissa Akin signed her Letter of Intent to play soccer at Piedmont College. Akin becomes the first soccer player from Union County to play at the next level since Haley Grimes in 2010 - who also went to Piedmont.

On Tuesday, Akin's Lady Panthers traveled to Norcross to take on the No. 1 team in the state.

After holding their own in the first half, trailing 3-0 at the break, GAC's depth and talent was too much to overcome as the Lady Spartans won the contest 9-0.

On Wednesday, it was the boys turn to go to Gwinnett County to take a crack at the No. 1 team in the state. Unfortunately, Union County fell 10-0 to the top-ranked GAC Spartans.

"Clearly we were up against the best teams in the state," Union Coach Tim Hunter said. "Their teams are full of elite club-level players. All they do is play soccer year-round for clubs in Metro-Atlanta. There are two hotbeds for soccer in the south. One is Gwinnett



Union County Lady Panther soccer star Marissa Akin signed to play at Piedmont College next year. Akin's signing capped off an up-and-down week for Union County soccer.

County and the other is Charlotte, N.C."

Although, they gave up nine goals, senior Lady Panther keeper Ansley Gutierrez recorded 15 saves.

"She played outstanding," Hunter said. "Ansley Garrison played very well, Taylor Burton played really good too. Overall, we played well and we played hard until the end. They were up against a lot of Division I and SEC commitments and they were trying really hard to mercy rule us. All four of the private schools from that Region are in the Final Four. I wouldn't be surprised if GAC

was ranked nationally."

The boys on the other hand, were mercy ruled with 71 seconds to play but only after a missed call erased a goal by senior Eric Hougrand. Unfortunately, Union was still without starting goalie Justin Eigel.

"Having Eigel in there might have made a difference in the final score but it wouldn't have changed the end result," Hunter said. "I played Hougrand at goalie for most of the game and he played very well."

On Thursday, the Union County soccer team gathered at the gymnasium as senior

Marissa Akin, ended the week on a positive note for Union soccer.

"She had a lot of opportunities to play at other schools but she loved Piedmont because she wants to be a physical therapist and insisted on playing somewhere that had her major," Hunter said. "She's a great student and will be a great player and a great fit for their program. I try to tell these kids that they need to go somewhere where they will get to play and she will definitely get to play at Piedmont. Marissa will be a great midfielder at the college level, I have no doubt."

Patience pays off for Union's Garrett Smith

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Waleska - Good things come to those who wait. Just ask Blairsville's Garrett Smith who was signed with the Reinhart University Football Program in Waleska on April 29.

This year will be the Reinhart Eagles first year playing a full football schedule.

Smith graduated from Union County High School in 2011 after playing football for four years under coaches Todd Peugh and Brian Allison. He also played basketball for four years under Coach Tim Hunter and David Tucker.

Smith will major in Biology while at Reinhart.



Garrett Smith with Coach Will Heath, Coach Larry Prather, his mother Christie Bennett and sister Karigan Wall. Garrett's friends, family and coaches are proud of him and wish him the very best.

NASCAR 2013

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Gibbs' teams finish 1-2 at Darlington

Kyle Busch appeared headed to victory lane in Saturday's Sprint Cup race at Darlington, but with 11 laps left in the 367-lap race, Busch had a right rear tire go down. This allowed Matt Kenseth to take the win, while Busch had to settle for sixth.

"It's awful sweet to win here," said Kenseth. "The car was really, really fast. We had a lot of speed in it. We just kind of got off. The racetrack changed, we got much looser than we anticipated. We really could never get it. The second to last pit stop we made we had it closer, but then it took off and wasn't going to be near good enough. I don't know what they changed the last pit stop.

"I told them about four laps into the run, if we were going green to the end, we were going to be pretty good. Thankfully we saved the best for last."

The win was the third for Kenseth this season, and the 27th of his career.

Denny Hamlin, Kenseth's teammate was runner-up.

"For me, we just kept grinding away," said Hamlin. "It was one of those days when we got our car better, pit crew picked us up positions, and took us to the second spot."

Jeff Gordon ran a steady race, and as the laps wound down, moved up to third.

"Our team is ready," said Gordon. "We had good track position, but we just couldn't get it right until there at the end. I thought we were really good. Each week I see the team getting better and better."

Jimmie Johnson was fourth and Kevin Harvick came in fifth.

For Kyle Busch, it was another frustrating night. He had the dominant car throughout the entire race, leading 265 of the 367 laps, but the apparent victory slipped away as the race neared its end.

Busch left the track without commenting. His frustration is understandable; he was fixing to win, and a misfortune smacked him, again. However, it could've been a lot worse. He couldn't hit the wall. He could've spun. The good news is he jumped two spots in points, and he still storms off.

between him and Kasey Kahne, has Kahne expecting an apology from Busch. It occurred on lap 333, after Kahne had managed to edge by Busch in Turn 3 for the lead. Busch moved ahead off Turn 4, then headed to turn 1 side by side. It appeared Kahne went into the turn a little too fast. Busch went low into the turn, but slipped a little.

Kahne slid up and brushed the wall.

"My car moved and then just spun out," said Kahne. "I don't know if he actually touched me or not. If he would have just entered normal like he entered the whole race there would have been no issues and I would have been leading off turn 2."

"He just didn't want that to happen, so he blew turn 1. Whether he hit me or not, he still caused that whole deal with screwing up and just mind fade. He's had a few of them this year when I've been around him."

Carl Edwards, Juan Montoya, Dale Earnhardt Jr., and Ryan Newman rounded out the top-10.

Top-12 points leaders after 11 of 36; 1. Johnson-423, 2. Edwards-379, 3. Kenseth-364, 4. Earnhardt 359, 5. Bowyer-349, 6. Kahne-326, 7. Keselowski-326, 8. Kyle Busch-325, 9. Almirola-317, 10. Harvick-315, 11. Menard-315, 12. Gordon-311.

"ROWDY" GETS 56th NATIONWIDE WIN

Kyle Busch completely dominated Friday night's Nationwide Series race at Darlington. In addition to winning the pole, he led 107 laps of the 147-lap race, on the way to his 56th career Nationwide win.

"We definitely had a fast car, but sometimes fastness isn't always best here (Darlington), said Busch. "You want to be good at both ends here. There's a lot of speed in 1 and 2, so you're going to have to take advantage of that as best you can. Three and 4 is an end where I'm not going to say slower is faster—but maintaining a minimum speed is better down there."

Elliott Sadler learned about turn 4 in a very practical way, he spun out. Despite the spin, he came back to finish second.



Matt Kenseth, winner of Darlington race, furnished by Toyota Motorsports

to keep up with the 54 car (Kyle Busch)," Sadler said. "I was trying to get up there and lead some laps, just went in there too hard and got loose and had to make a decision whether to spin out or try to correct it. I overcorrected and spun out."

Brian Vickers, Joey Logano, Matt Kenseth, Kyle Larson, Regan Smith, Sam Hornish, Kasey Kahne, and Justin Allgaier were the remaining top-10 finishers.

Top-10 points leaders after 9 of 33: 1. Smith-342, 2. Hornish-314, 3. Sadler-300, 4. Allgaier-299, 5. Vickers-293, 6. A. Dillon-290, 7. Kligerman-287, 8. Scott-284, 9. Bowman-258, Larson-248

DID NASCAR SUFFER A SETBACK

NASCAR needs to rethink their penalties.

Last week, the penalties assessed by NASCAR against Penske Racing and Joe Gibbs Racing were reduced after the appeals process was completed.

Joe Gibb's owner points penalty was reduced from 50 to 12, and his suspension was eliminated, while driver Matt Kenseth's points penalty was reduced from 50 to 12.

Kenseth's win at Kansas will now count for the Chase.

The manufacturer's point penalty against Toyota increased from 5 to 7 points; Kenseth's crew chief Jason Ratcliff's suspension has been reduced from 6 races to 1, but his fine remains at \$200,000.

In the Penske case, crew suspensions were reduced from six point races to two on its final appeal.

John Middlebrook upheld the 25-point penalties to Penske drivers Brad Keselowski and Joey Logano, as well as fines and part of the suspensions. He created the perception that the violations were still major, but the team should get some benefit of the doubt, since they were working in a gray area in the rulebook, and not having raced the unapproved parts, shouldn't result in such hefty suspensions.

PHOENIX RACING CALLING IT QUITS

Unable to find a long-term sponsor for either of his No. 51 Sprint Cup team, or No. 1 Nationwide team, James Finch said he is going to call it quits.

"I'm contemplating the rest of this year, and I don't know if I want a sponsor," Finch said. "Sunday was my 776th start in NASCAR between the Nationwide and Sprint Cup. That's a lot of weekends. I'm considering pulling the plug later in the summer."

Finch, 62, said Phoenix Racing will not enter any races after the Brickyard 400 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

"I have not been able to get the right amount of funding, the economy is pretty bad, and a lot of people don't want to do it," Finch continued. "I'm getting kind of burned out. I think it is time for me to do something else."

Weekend Racing: It's the Trucks and Cup teams this weekend at the one and one-half mile Charlotte Motor Speedway. For the Cup teams, it's the annual all-star event, a non-points night of racing.

Fri., May 17, Camping World Trucks, race 5 of 22; Starting time: 8 pm ET; TV: SPEED.

Sat., May 18, Sprint Cup All-Star event; Starting time: 7:30 pm ET; TV: SPEED.

Racing Trivia Question: How many Cup championships did David Pearson win?

Last Week's Question: Who is Aric Almirola's teammate at Richard Petty Motorsports? Answer: It is Marcos Ambrose.

You may e-mail the Racing Reporter at: hodges@race500.com.



Tips from the Range

I have heard it said that there is only one swing for every club and I agree with this statement, for the most part. Every swing has consistent fundamentals and is dependent upon certain repeatable motions but every swing is not the same. Each club is unique in its design and function, therefore; the swing involved with each club will be unique.

When striking most iron shots, you will make a divot. A wedge will typically make a longer and deeper divot than a 5-iron. These divot patterns are in direct relation to the length of the club you're using, so the longer the shaft then the shallower the divot. Since this is true, then it stands to reason that there should be little evidence of impact when using a fairway wood. In other words, a fairway wood should simply sweep the ball off of the turf and this is one of the most difficult actions to perform with a golf club. This fact alone is why fairway wood shots demand precision and the swing must be nearly perfect to consistently hit good fairway wood shots.

Proper impact with a fairway wood is totally dependent on solid fundamentals. It is extremely important to have the correct ball position and to maintain your balance throughout the swing. The bottom of the swing arc must coincide with the position of the ball almost perfectly. If the ball is too far forward in the stance then you will hit it thin and end up with what many golfers call a "worm burner". If the ball is too far back in the stance then you will top the shot and the ball won't go very far. So, how do we determine the correct ball position to use when playing a fairway wood shot? I am so glad you asked.

First, take your normal stance and push a short tee into the ground aligned just inside your front foot and in line with the swing path so that the top of said tee is the same height as the turf grass and located at the proper distance away to play a 3-wood shot. Next, place another tee about

8 inches back from the front tee, at the same height, but still in line with your take away path. Now, place another tee 12 inches behind the middle tee again at the same height and on the same line as the other two. Place the head of your 3-wood behind the middle tee and start taking some practice swings being careful to not hit the tee but simply swing over the top of it to make sure you can maintain your balance. If you can barely brush the top of the tee then your balance is close to being proper. Now comes the more difficult part of finding the exact location to place the ball in your stance.

To find the best ball position, place the head of your 3-wood behind the middle tee and make your normal take away. Make sure you swing the club down the same way as you always do and try to make contact with the forward tee. The spot where the club hits the ground is the exact position your ball needs to be in order to make good contact with a fairway wood on a normal shot or in other words, the spot where the club head impacted the ground is the ball position spot you should use when playing fairway woods.

As I stated earlier, your fundamentals need to be solid to make consistent impact with fairway woods. Do not let your head move and make sure you keep your eye on the ball. Impact has to be precise to hit a good shot off the fairway so swing smooth and keep your grip light. Stay away from the ball and always let your arms straighten through impact. Practice is crucial when learning to hit this shot.

Okay, we have now covered the basic swing development aspects and I hope it has been helpful. I would like to start having some fun by helping you with your swing problems. I will need to know if the ball is starting off on the target line and moving one way or another or if the ball is starting off left or right of where you are aiming. Please e-mail me at jcollins.tcherald@windstream.net with any questions you have. You will be surprised by how common your flaws are among most golfers. I will analyze your issue and discuss it here in "Tips". Go ahead and give it a shot. I bet I can help. Good luck and I will see you on the course!

Jones ...continued from page 12A

was he coached much the same way as Coach Ross."

Jones also credits former Head Boys Coach and current girls coach David Tucker, whom he served as an assistant under last season.

"I was fortunate enough to coach with a man who has won over 600 games in his career," Jones said. "He does a great job of getting his players to play hard. He is also one of the best in the business when it comes to shooting. He can watch a kid shoot and know immediately what to do to help that kid be a better shooter. He is also a master of the 1-1-3 defense which is very effective."

Jones has already met with the team and has some plans in the works for the future of Union County basketball. Atop his list of priorities, to allow the current crop of Panthers to experience what it's like to play in "The Pit." The legendary, and feared gym hasn't seen a high school game since 2002, and hopefully Jones will be able to change that with a "throwback night," sometime during the season.

"I want these kids to experience what myself and many others before me experienced," Jones said. "There is nothing that compares to playing there."

As for the team that Jones inherits, it will be a young, but talented squad. Union lost two All-Region selections in Rhett McCombs and Zach Odom,

along with two-year starters C.J. Byers and James Rowe. However, preparation for the 2013-14 campaign begins next week, according to Jones.

"We are losing four great players but I'm excited about what we have returning," he said. "We have two seniors that I know will work hard and lead our team. The junior class will be well represented with 13 players. We should have a deep bench and our goal is to outwork every team in the region. This process will begin on May 20th at 7 a.m. in the weight room. We will pride ourselves on hard work, effort, character, and integrity. If we take care of this, winning will take care of itself."

The summer camp season will tip off in June with two camps at Tennessee Wesleyan, Georgia College, and one in Blairsville.

"I have met with the team and I told them that I was very excited, and also very grateful to be their coach," Jones said. "I explained to them that we have a lot to do and it starts now. When we hit the floor in November, you can expect to see a team that plays hard on defense, takes charges, dives after loose balls, and gets up and down the floor in a hurry."

"Union County is the only place I ever dreamed of coaching at," he added. "I love this place and hope to be here for years to come."

1st Annual Antioch Student Benefit SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT
SATURDAY JUNE 1, 2013 at 8 a.m.
Hayesville Recreation Center
Homerun Derby, Food and Fun
Church teams are welcome!
Registration deadline is May 18th
\$125 per team
Please call Patty to register or for more information (706) 745-9320

UCRD Programs
Football (tackle); registration is May 1 - June 15, ages 7-12; fee \$90 (after June 15 \$100); teams assigned by age. Football (flag); registration is May 1 - June 15, ages 5-6; fee \$35 (after June 15 \$45). Wrestling; registration is May 1 - 15, ages 4 - 14; fee \$30. Cheerleading; registration is May 1 - June 15, ages

Trout stocking sites week of May 6-10, 2013
Fannin: Big Creek, Hemptown Creek, Hothouse Creek, Rock Creek, Toccoa River, and Toccoa River Tailwaters (below Lake Blue Ridge).
Lumpkin: Etowah River and Niblewill Creek.
Union: Canada Creek, Cooper Creek, Suches Creek, and Winfield Scott Lake.
Note: Information is subject to change. Please call the hatchery at 706-838-4723 for questions. The hatchery also provides trout for the state. Please contact Georgia DNR for information on sites stocked by the state.