

# Sports

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## Softball practice opens with a Region title on the minds of the Lady Panthers

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Practice began for the Union County Lady Panthers softball team on Monday and Head Coach Jessica Stewart and her squad have set their sights on the Region 8-AA Championship and a trip to the Elite 8 in Columbus.

It's hard to believe that it was 2010 when Union last reached the Elite 8 and 2011 when they last won a region title. But during the three-year region title drought, the Lady Panthers averaged more than 22 wins per year and finished as the Region Runner-up twice and placed third in 2013.

Union County is also coming off a 2014 season that saw them set a team record for most regular season wins en route to a 29-8 campaign where the Lady Panthers were one game away from reaching the Elite 8.

"Our goal is to win Region this year," Coach Stewart said. "We've lost six-in-a-row to Social Circle and our girls can't wait to get a chance this year to change that. Rabun has continued to get better and I'm sure it'll be two good ball games."

So entering 2015, Union County has high hopes with two First Team All Region selections returning in senior Maddie Garrett and junior Laken Chambers. Junior Kendra Tanner is coming back following a Second Team All Region nod in 2015.

"Chambers and Garrett



Senior Maddie Garrett (left) will move to catcher this year and join her battery-mate, junior Laken Chambers (right). Photos/Todd Forrest

should continue to lead this group but I look for Tanner to do big things at the plate," Coach Stewart said. "Sophomore Braden Poteete is slapping and is a killer baserunner. We have several different weapons that will help us win games this year."

Meanwhile, the Lady Panthers will welcome back senior infielder Karley Nix who went down with an injury during the Region Tournament last October and was forced to miss the remainder of the season.

"I am confident in Chambers on the mound for her third year, as well as having Garrett's bat and Nix back at second base

after her hand injury," Coach Stewart said.

However, Union must replace three First Team All Region selections and one Second Team selection after Courtney Busbee, Crystal Busbee, Kelsey Nix, and Halle King graduated in the spring.

Courtney Busbee was a four-year starter at catcher where she played in 140 games - the second most in team history and the most by a catcher. She is currently fifth in team history with 135 hits, 67 RBIs, and 27 doubles.

She is also second all-time with 50 walks.

"I have used freshman Courtney Moose, Garrett and junior Lydia Arrowood at the catcher position," Coach Stewart said. "Right now, Garrett at catcher and Arrowood at third is what is working best. Lydia has played outfield, infield and catcher and will be a force wherever she is playing. The outfielders from last season have all moved to the infield so we are looking at finding consistency on defense. Tanner has taken over at shortstop and



so far, she has done a great job, and will more than likely hit in the leadoff position."

Crystal Busbee started in the middle infield for three years where she totaled 42 career walks - third most in team history. Her 98 runs scored are second all-time

Kelsey Nix hit .360 in 2014 with 2 homers and 30 RBIs. King hit .323 with a homer, 10 doubles, and 21 RBIs. Both were two-year starters at the corner infield spots.

A bright spot for the Lady Panthers is the fact that two-time defending Region 8-AA Champion Social Circle graduated more All-Region selections than second place Union County.

The Lady Redskins lose Kenzie Maddox, the 8-AA Player of the Year and a 2nd Team All-State selection. They lose Lexie Griffin, the 8-AA Pitcher of the Year and a 1st Team All-State selection.

Also graduating were: Brea Dickson, a 1st Team All-Region pick, Lexi Austin - 2nd Team All-Region, and Linsay Link - 2nd

Team All-Region.

However, the Lady Redskins will bring back Haley Barnes who was named 1st Team All Region last year.

Rabun County should also compete for the Region title with seven starters returning, three of which were 1st Team All Region and their pitcher was named 2nd Team All-Region.

They lost 2nd Team All-Region selection Taylor Houston to graduation.

With their ace and the heart of their lineup returning, the Lady Cats have region championship and Elite 8 aspirations of their own, but fortunately, the Lady Panthers might have the answer for Rabun.

Last year, in Union's five meetings with Rabun, Chambers threw 5 complete games, 3 shutouts while surrendering only 8 hits in 32 innings of work with 23 strikeouts.

As for the Union County ace's season as a whole, Chambers won 23 games with an ERA of 1.54. She would strikeout 141 hitters while allowing 122 hits in



Karley Nix

173 innings.

Once again, Chambers should share innings with sophomore Jillian Lawn, who was extremely solid as a freshman. She won four games with an ERA of 1.08 in 39 innings of work.

In the first start of her career, she threw a complete game shutout vs Banks County. Then, in the Region Championship game, Lawn pitched 5 2/3 innings while allowing just one run after Chambers was knocked out of the game early.

In just 45 at bats last season, Lawn hit .444 with 11 runs, 10 RBIs, and 9 walks.

Sophomore Logan Seabolt also saw action from the circle, recording 10 varsity innings in 2014.

"I feel very excited about our pitching staff," Coach Stewart said. "Chambers should lead the way in 8AA this year, Lawn will help out, and we also added freshman Madeline Tanner to the mix that will compliment our team very well."

"This is one of the most talented freshman groups I've had in a long time. Some should see a good bit of playing time on varsity."

At the plate, Garrett will anchor the middle of the lineup along with Chambers and Tanner.

Last year, Garrett led the team in hitting with a .377 batting average while going deep four times (tied with Chambers for team lead) and driving in 32 runs.

Tanner hit .360 while setting a new single-season team record with 7 triples and 20 RBIs.

Chambers smacked four homers and also led the team with 36 RBIs and 11 doubles, while hitting .330 on the year.

Arrowood finished with a .352 batting average while scoring 20 runs and driving in 10 runs.

Karley Nix returns for her senior year after hitting .462, scoring 9 times and driving in 3 runs in the five games leading up to her injury. For the season, the middle infielder committed just one error in 91 chances.

"Karley has already made some outstanding plays at second base this summer and will definitely help our other infielders improve," Coach Stewart said. "She also has been working hard in the cage from the left side and has become a power slapper."

The season gets underway on Friday, Aug. 7th vs North Forsyth at 5:50 p.m. at the Lanier Point Invitational in Gainesville. Union will also play four games on Saturday, Aug 8th, beginning at 10:30 a.m..

This Saturday, Aug. 1st the softball team will be bagging groceries at Bi-Lo from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. as a fundraiser for the softball program.



Junior Kendra Tanner tripled a team-record seven times in 2014.

## Blairsville PTO, INC.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual S.O.S. Glow Golf Tournament

(Support Our Schools) 4 Person Scramble

presented by Union General Hospital

## Friday, July 31, 2015

### Old Union Golf Course

### Blairsville, GA

Pre Registration Fee by July 24, 2015  
\$75 per player • \$300 per foursome

Registration Fee after July 25th or day of Event  
\$85 per player • Registration starts at 4 p.m.

Tee Off @ 5:00 p.m. • Dinner @ 8 p.m.  
Glow Golf Begins @ 8:45 p.m.  
Awards at Conclusion of Play!

Player 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Handicap: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Player 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Handicap: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Player 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Handicap: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Player 4: \_\_\_\_\_ Handicap: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form & payment (check/money order) to  
Blairsville PTO  
P.O. Box 1059  
Blairsville, GA 30514  
or email registration info to  
blairsville\_pto@ucschools.org

For more information on the tournament and/or Sponsorship information  
call 706.745.4653 or email blairsville\_pto@ucschools.org.

## Attention ladies... it's Sadie Hawkins Tournament Day

Now is the time to "Pick a Partner" and sign up to play in our Annual Sadie Hawkins Golf Tournament at Butternut Creek Golf Course on Saturday, August 1, 2015.

Format is Select Shot between you and your partner. Cost is \$45 per person. Prizes will be given for Flight Winners and Closest to the Pin.

Registration along with a delicious breakfast, prepared by our ladies, will begin at 7:30 AM. Tee Time will begin at 8:30 AM. Lunch will be provided after play.

Let's make this picture come true and 'pick a partner'. This is a great fun day at golf!

Make checks payable to BCLGA Sadie Hawkins Golf Tournament and send check & Handicap to Betty



Taylor, P.O. Box 296, Blairsville, GA 30514 or call Betty Taylor at 706-745-2248 - cell phone 706-781-9910 by July 27, 2015. You can sign up in the Pro Shop also - 706-439-6076. NJuly29Z7JCA

## Upward Flag Football and Cheerleading 2015 registration



On-line registration is now open for Upward Flag Football and Cheerleading for boys and girls in grades Kindergarten through 8th Grade at [www.hopb.org](http://www.hopb.org) or at [www.fumcunioncounty.org](http://www.fumcunioncounty.org).

The registration price to participate is \$60, through August 1st, and an additional \$10 will be applied thereafter. Payment plans are available, if needed. Convenient weekly practices commence Thursday, August 13th, while games will be held every Saturday between August 29th and October 3rd.

Registrants should attend the evaluation that will be held on Saturday, August 1st on a drop-in basis between the

hours of 9 a.m. and 12 p.m. on the football field by the House of Prayer Family Life Center located behind the sanctuary.

For more information regarding registration, contact either church office at HOP (706) 745-5925 or FUMC (706) 745-2073. Information regarding Upward Sports can be found online at [www.upward.org](http://www.upward.org).

Established in 1995, Upward Sports is the world's largest Christian youth sports provider. Upward Sports develops total athletes mentally, athletically, spiritually, and socially - producing players who excel both on and off the field. Today, approximately half a million players at more than 2,000 churches in 47 states participate in camps, clinics, and leagues through Upward Sports' Recreation Division.

### Trout stocking sites week of July 20-14, 2015

Fannin: Rock Creek  
Union: Cooper Creek  
Note: Information is subject to change. For the latest on stocking and event information, remember to "like" us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ChattahoocheeForestNationalFishHatchery](http://www.facebook.com/ChattahoocheeForestNationalFishHatchery). 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. NJuly29Z9JCA