

# Sports

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## Garrison dominates Carrollton again

### Lady Panthers come up two points shy of 10th place overall finish

By Todd Forrest  
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**Carrollton** - Many of the so called 'experts' predicted a tight finish between Union County sophomore Emma Garrison and Wesleyan senior Caroline Reed.

It was said that Garrison hadn't faced the same level of competition that the Atlanta private schools had seen.

Despite entering the race as the defending State Champion it still felt like Garrison was an unknown.

As she pulled away by 15 seconds in the first mile, many spectators had no idea who she was, or what she was doing that far in front.

As the midway point of the race neared, Garrison had stretched her lead over Reed to 28 seconds. Just past the half-way point, her lead expanded to more than 30 seconds.

"She seemed to have a very good start, and then when she crested that hill and started down and I saw she was all alone in the lead; I knew she was going to have a great day," Union County Head Coach Jackie Hughes said. "I think it was the best I had seen her run all season."

Reed would falter down the stretch, unable to keep up with Union's speedy sophomore, and with 800 meters remaining, Reed was no longer in second place, instead, it was Lovett freshman Serena Tripodi, 150 meters back of Garrison.

"I just came in with an open mind this year because I didn't know what to expect, and I didn't know what the competition would be like," Garrison said.

Garrison would cross the finish line in 19:10, Tripodi followed 37 seconds later, then came Reed, eight seconds behind Tripodi and 45 seconds after Garrison.

"Last year her lead narrowed a little in the last mile, but not this year," Coach Hughes said. "She stayed strong the whole way. I'm sure there will continue to be pressure simply because she is the one to try to beat, but I think that the biggest pressure is off because she proved that she could do it again; that it wasn't just a one time thing. I think she soundly settled that issue yesterday."

Garrison now joins Chris Jones as Union County's only repeat State Champion but she claims that while last season was tougher physically, trying to repeat took its toll on her mentally.

"Physically it was a little bit easier this year," Garrison said. "It was colder this time so I didn't get overheated as



The two favorites: Union County's Emma Garrison (center) and Wesleyan's Caroline Reed (far left) at the starting line. Garrison would quickly put the other 195 runners in the rear view. Photo/Todd Forrest



Garrison at just under a mile into the race. At this point she already had a 15 second advantage over second place. Photo/Todd Forrest



Garrison is given her medal at the Class AA awards ceremony following the race. Photo/Todd Forrest

quickly so I think this year was a little bit easier than last year, so mentally it was tougher."

Garrison's State Championship led Union County to an 11th place overall finish. Junior Rachel Todd placed 67th with a time of 24:14, freshman Cora Bauman was 74th at 24:35, and sophomore Stephanie Busse was 86th at 25:06.

At 95th place was sophomore Emmeline Stuart with a time of 25:29, junior Marissa Spaulding placed 96th at 25:32, and sophomore Anna Danek came in 117th at 26:41.

Union was only two points shy of 10th place Model, who highest finisher was 45th, but they were able to pack well with most of their runners placing between 46th and 71st.

"The girls' team this year

has been a very pleasant surprise," Coach Hughes said. "We lost four out of our top seven runners from last year, but this group kept working and improving and they fought their way all the way back to the State Meet. Emma, Rachel Todd, and Stephanie Busse ran at Carrollton last year, but it was the first time for the other four. Cora Bauman, a freshman, came in third for us, and Emmeline Stuart and Marissa Spaulding, both first year runners, were close behind her. Anna Danek, also a first year runner, also ran an excellent race yesterday. I felt that they gave it everything they had yesterday. They are a gritty, competitive group and they have done everything we have asked them to this year."

Without a senior on the



Rachel Todd early in the race. Todd finished second for the Lady Panthers. Photo/Todd Forrest



Cora Bauman and Emmeline Stuart have each been pleasant surprises to Coach Jackie Hughes this season. Photos/Todd Forrest

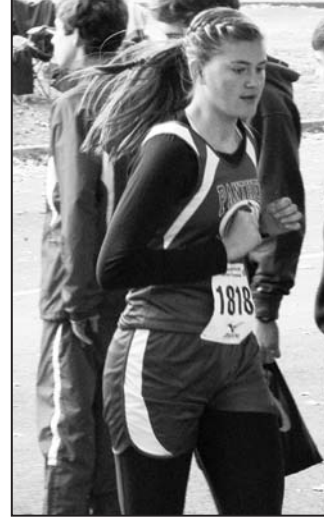


Team Region Championship. Garrison will also be gunning for a three-peat, something that no athlete in school history has ever pulled off.

But as for Coach Hughes' closing remarks to the team, she told them she was proud of them and to have fun at the



Marissa Spaulding



Stephanie Busse

school dance later in the day.

"I told them how proud I was of their performance at State and with how well they had represented Union County High School," Coach Hughes told her squad. "I reminded them of how far they had come since the beginning of the season and that it was because they were willing to work hard and never give up. I thanked the seniors for their leadership, and told the rest of them we would see them again next year. Then I told them to go have fun at the Fall Ball."

## Garcia leads Panthers to 14th at Cross Country State Championships

By Todd Forrest  
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**Carrollton** - At the Region 8-AA Meet last month, sophomore Cristian Garcia said his goal was to keep the lead runner in sight for as long as possible.

At the State Meet, Garcia was with the leaders during the first mile of the race. Marcus Guthro of Riverside Military Academy, someone Garcia was familiar with was in the lead, and things were looking up for Region 8-AA.

However, during the second mile, Garcia got caught up in traffic and lost more than 20 spots and Guthro fell to second.

"Cristian may have gone out a little too fast at the start, but that is ok," Union County Head Coach Jackie Hughes said. "I have been encouraging him to push his limits and see what he can do. I think he will continue to get stronger and stronger and be able to maintain that speed for longer and longer distances. I believe aiming to stay with the boy from Riverside is an achievable goal for Cristian."

Garcia eventually finished in 72nd place, coming in at 19:35, leading Union to a respectable 14th place finish out of 28 teams.

The Panthers defeated the 15th place Greater Atlanta Christian by 29 points. Sophomore Jacob Kelley came in 80th at



Cristian Garcia

19:44, and senior Josh Weaver 87th at 19:56. Yet, the surprise of the day may have come from junior Aaron Stafford's 88th place finish at 19:57, his best race of the season.

"Josh Weaver came in third for us yesterday and ran extremely well," Coach Hughes said. "He has been improving steadily since the race at Unicoi. He ended up having an excellent senior year and was very helpful in our strong finish. Aaron Stafford and Jacob Kelley had good races yesterday as well. Aaron ran one of his strongest races of the year. Really, all seven of them performed up to or above my expectations. They really rose to the occasion, and I was very proud of them."

Junior Andrew Nelson was 97th with a time of 20:10, and senior Ryan Rogers placed



The Panthers were off to a fast start. Photo/Todd Forrest

100th at 20:22.

Freshman Jakob Brown was solid in his first look at the Carrollton Course and the State Meet. The freshman was 109th at 20:22.

"Team wise, the boys improved three places over their finish last year," Coach Hughes said. "They seemed very focused and determined before the race started. Individually there were quite a few who did very well."

There have been some complaints over the years, mostly from South Georgia schools, regarding the hilly Carrollton course, that is believed to favor the mountain states. (Townsend County and White County also brought home State Championships in their respective classifications). But Coach Hughes is quick to defend the difficult course in Car-

rollton and the admirable job they do in holding the State Championships every year.

"The Carrollton course is probably pretty hilly compared to some of the South Georgia courses, but the State Championship course should be challenging," Coach Hughes said. "That's one of the reasons that I changed our home course this year, to better prepare us for running at Carrollton. They have held it there for years, and they do an excellent job. It really is amazing how smoothly everything runs considering how much is involved."

Coach Hughes also thanked some in the community for their generosity.

"I would like to thank United Community Bank for their generous donation that allowed us to have a great pre-race



Coach Hughes with her squad before the race. Photo/Todd Forrest



Josh Weaver



Jacob Kelley

meal on Friday night, and for their continuous support of the students of Union County," she said. "I also appreciate the help and support we have received this year from the faculty, staff and administration. Big thank you's

also go to all the parents who supported us this year by coming to meets, organizing team events, and providing drinks and snacks to meet. Finally, I would like to thank Coach (Shawnetta) Reece for all her help this year."