

Sports

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Panthers churn out 31 runs, 28 hits in two wins over Gilmer

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Union County baseball opened 2017 with a bang as they pummeled Gilmer County with 31 runs over 13 innings during a two-game home-and-home sweep.

On Tuesday, the Panthers overcame an early 2-0 deficit on their way to a 15-7, season opening victory in Ellijay.

Thursday, Union would welcome the Bobcats to Blairsville and the home team picked up where they left off two days earlier – jumping out to an early lead and never looking back during a 16-6 pounding that was shortened to six innings, via the “mercy rule.”

“I was not expecting that we would come out swinging the bats like that,” Union County Head Coach Robby Roxbury said. “I was very impressed with how much we were able to make contact.”

A leadoff triple by junior Patrick Baggett was followed by a Logan Dyer RBI single to put Union on the board. Starting pitcher RJ Banton took a pitch in the back – resulting in a free base and bringing Alec Scott into the game as a courtesy runner.

Scott quickly took second on a passed ball then advanced to third on a Dawson Groves ground out before making it a 2-0 game when he slid safely into home thanks to a two-out wild pitch by Gilmer starter Evan Frady.

The Bobcats answered with a run off Banton in the second and third innings to knot the score at 2 apiece.



Coach Robby Roxbury likes what he saw from his Panthers last week vs Gilmer. Photo/Todd Forrest

A leadoff walk by Dyer set the table for a six-run third inning that chased Frady from the contest and gave the Panthers a comfortable 8-2 advantage. Banton reached on an infield single that put runners on the corners for Groves who blasted the second pitch of the at bat into deep center – scoring Dyer and the courtesy runner Scott.

Dell Ruff reached on an error by the Gilmer shortstop allowing freshman pinch runner Pierson Allison to score – making it a 5-2 game. Union County wasn't finished as Crawford Colwell was plunked on a 1-2 count by reliever David Smith. A Candler Colwell walk loaded the bases and a Cole Davis ground out scored Ruff. Slade Thompson provided the punctuation on the six-run outburst with a two-run single to center.

Davis replaced Banton on the mound to begin the fourth and the junior south-

paw worked a perfect inning to allow the offense to inflict further damage on the reeling Bobcats.

Groves beat out a swinging bunt to open the bottom of the fourth and Ruff drew an 8-pitch, base-on-balls to put two aboard with nobody out.

Forced to turn to the bullpen once again, Gilmer handed the ball to Bradley Thomas and Candler Colwell welcomed him to the game with a one-out RBI single – scoring Groves - to stretch the lead to 9-2. Davis laced a 2-2 pitch into right field to bring Ruff and Candler Colwell around to score. With Scott running for the pitcher once more, Thompson brought him home for his second run of the game, and his team's 12th run.

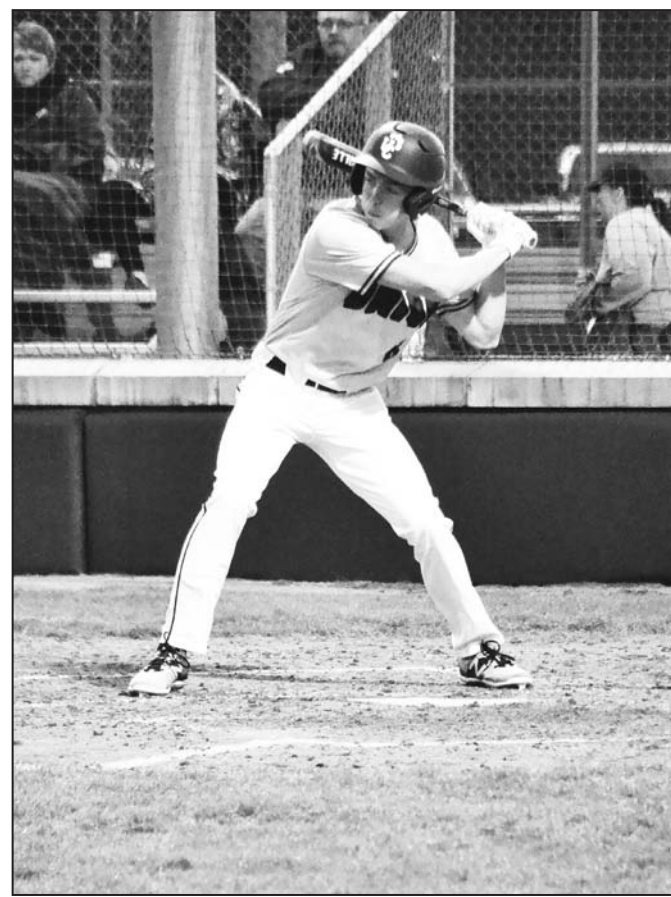
“The bottom of the order has helped us quite a bit and those guys are just going to keep getting better as they get more reps,” Roxbury said.

Gilmer tagged Davis for four runs in the fifth – two were unearned thanks in part to a dropped third strike followed by an error.

With the lead cut in half, the Panthers erased any chances of a Gilmer comeback bid with two in the bottom half of the inning. Dyer and Banton each walked and scored on a two-out, two-run single by Crawford Colwell that made it a 14-6 game.

Pitcher Ean Harkins entered for Union worked around a leadoff single in the sixth with a strikeout and a double-play ball to Dyer at second.

The Panthers ended



After two games, junior Cole Davis is leading the team in batting average at .500 to go with a team best 5 RBIs. He has also worked four innings on the mound, recording the win in Ellijay. Photo/Todd Forrest

things early with two in the six to bring the “mercy rule” into effect.

A Davis single, a Thompson walk, and a Gilmer error on a Baggett grounder made it 15-6. Dyer's third walk of the game loaded the bases allowing Ruff to end the game with a rare, walk-off hit-by-pitch to score Baggett.

Ruff finished the game 1-for-3 with 2 runs and 2 RBIs while Baggett went 2-for-5 and scored twice. Davis drove in three runs during a 2-for-4 day at the plate. He also fanned two in 2 innings of work on the mound.

Thompson also pulled off the hat trick with a three RBI performance. Crawford Colwell was 1-for-2 with 2 RBIs, a run, and a stolen base. Candler Colwell finished 2-for-3 while scoring twice and driving home one.

Dawson Groves ended the day 2-for-5 with 2 RBIs, a run and a double. Banton scored once while finishing 1-for-3 at the dish. He also picked up the win after tossing 39 pitches over three innings, striking out two, and scattering four hits – resulting in two runs. Dyer drew three base-on-balls during a 1-for-2 day that produced a pair of runs.

Harkins worked a nine-pitch sixth inning that resulted in one hit and one K.

In the first meeting on Tuesday, the Panthers clawed their way in front with six in the third to take a 7-2 lead that they would eventually extend to 15-7 thanks to 15 hits and four different players with two

RBIs. The Bobcats finished with 11 hits and recorded two runs in the fifth that cut the deficit to 10-5, but Union answered with three in the sixth and two in the seventh.

Davis relieved senior Josh Natchtrieb in the third to pick up the win. Davis lasted 2.1 innings before handing it over to Banton, who went 1.2 innings and struck out two.

Baggett worked the seventh inning – allowing one unearned run.

Natchtrieb fanned four Bobcats while yielding three hits. Davis recorded two punch outs and allowed two earned.

After graduating its top two pitchers Lance Rich and Joseph Mancuso in 2016, Coach Roxbury and staff are still trying to find the heir apparent at the top of the rotation.

“That's what we're trying to figure out right now is who's going to replace those guys,” Roxbury said. “We're blessed in the fact that we have a lot of guys who are able to pitch and have some pretty good stuff. I think there might even be a few freshman that could help us when we get into the region schedule.”

At the plate, Baggett, Banton, Groves, Ruff, and Davis each finished with a two-hit game while Candler Colwell had three hits, three runs, and 2 RBIs.

Also driving in a pair was Thompson, Davis, Crawford Colwell, and Groves.

Baggett stole four bases.

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Alec Scott (6) slides safely into home after a Gilmer wild pitch in the first inning. He was running for starting pitcher RJ Banton who was hit by a pitch. Photo/Todd Forrest

USA Wrestling Sports Club for male and female athletes



Blairsville USA Wrestling Team

USA Wrestling is a sports club open to male and female athletes between the ages of five and fifteen. USA cards cost \$50 are purchased on the TEAM GEORGIA page and good for the whole year. USA cards and registering for tournaments are both handled on this website: www.teamgeorgiawrestling.com

We offer practices twice a week: Tuesday and Thursday from 5:30 to 7 p.m. We compete in folkstyle and freestyle/greco sessions. Freestyle season will start at the end of March.

Our coaches are all USA certified and take athletes to tournaments twice a month. Our coaches include head coach Zack Williams, Cody Queen, and Johnny Floyd. Nick Bertuna, Thomas Wil-



Blairsville USA Wrestling Team practice

liams, and Michael Smith-Foot also assist with the program. Coach Thomas Williams will be lead coach during the freestyle season for the high school team, while Coach Zack Williams will be lead coach for the youth team. (Marr, A3) CA

UCHS Track team opens season at White County



Junior Riley Barrett takes fourth in the High Jump

By Todd Forrest
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Cleveland - The new season of Track and Field got underway last week for a young, but fervent Union County team.

With 25 guys and 14 ladies, UCHS will be fielding its largest team since the program was restarted in 2014. But for the most part, the team will lack experience with 12 freshman and 14 upperclassman in their first year of Track and Field.

However, according to head coach Shawnetta Reece, this team makes up for its limited experience with a hunger that will yield positive results in the immediate future, as well as down the road.

“They are eager to learn and put in some hard practices to perfect their skills,” she said. “They are a great group to coach and I expect great things to happen as they progress through the years to come.”

Hosted by White County, Union placed in the top 5 in 11 different events while competing against Stephens County, Riverside Military Academy, and the home-standing Warriors.

RESULTS:
Triple Jump - Cole Wright, 2nd place

Chad Buzzard, 3rd place

“We can expect Cole (Wright) to place high in all his meets,” Reece said. “With a few minor tweaks, I expect him to record jumps past 40-feet.”

High Jump - Riley Barrett and Kanon Hemphill, 4th place (tie).

“Riley is a great addition to the team,” Reece said. “He specializes in sprints, high jump and has already recorded a team record of 11.55 in the 100m.”

Shot Put - Skyler Ludlum, 3rd place

3200m: (Boys) - Will Harkins, 5th place

3200m (Girls) - Zoe Sanchez 2nd place.

“Both are freshman and are already starting off with great times for the beginning of the season,” Reece said.

1600m (Girls) - Sanchez, 2nd place

Latty Ryals, 5th place. “Latty is new to Track & Field and is off to a great start as a distance runner,” Reece said.

800m - Cole Payne, 3rd place.

300m Hurdles - Dylan Dockery, 2nd place (.04 seconds behind first place)

400m (Boys) - Adrian Shaw, 4th place.

400m (Girls) - Aladriel Arnold, 5th place.

Boys 4x400 A team - Bryan Nelson, Jared Herum, Payne and Shaw, 3rd place

Boys 4x400 B team - Will Harkins, Chad Buzzard, Kyle Morlock and Timothy Murphy, 5th place

Boys 4x100 A team - Buzzard, Herum, Barrett and Wright, 3rd place