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Union County High School spring 8-AA All Region selections

By Todd Forrest Sports Editor sports@nganews.com

A pair of Union County sophomores, a junior and a senior headlined the school's spring postseason accolades with soccer standouts Trent Baker, Kyra McKechnie, Kyler Robbins and Lara Turner each taking home Region 8-AA's Turner earned Offen-

sive Region Player of the Year honors following a breakout 2022 campaign that saw the sophomore forward lead the Lady Panthers to their second 8-AA title and Elite Eight berth

On the other end of the pitch, McKechnie anchored the Union defense with nine shutouts, earning the sophomore the title of 8-AA's top goalkeeper.

Meanwhile, the boys team included a pair of POY selections in Robbins (Offense) and Baker (Goalkeeper). Robbins, a four-year

starter at midfielder, was instrumental in the most successful four-year run in program history. As a freshman, Robbins was a member of the State Runner-up squad, scoring the clinching goal in Union's Final Four victory at Vidalia.

After COVID-19 cancelled the 2020 postseason, Robbins and the Panthers won consecutive 8-AA titles, finishing both seasons undefeated in region play. Against 8-AA competition this spring, Robbins scored 16 goals and dealt

As for Baker, the junior goalkeeper was forced into a difficult situation from the getgo -- following in the footsteps of one of the program's all-time greats, Aaron Helton.

For the first time since 2017, Union County relied on a goalkeeper other than Helton and Baker proved up to the challenge, blanking the opposition in two of his first three starts. He ended the year with 10 shutouts, six coming against 8-AA com-

Union's other first-team selections went to senior MJ Delatte, sophomore Zuriel Mancillas and junior Isaiah Ortiz.

Junior Wilson Walker and a pair of sophomores, Eli Decker and Benton Gregory,



Union County soccer seniors: (L-R) MJ Delatte, Kyler Robbins, Melia Whitener, Loralei Skinner and Savannah Evans. Photo/Todd Forrest



Lara Turner. Photo/Todd Forrest





Union County baseball seniors: (L-R) Coach Brock Gordon, Logan Anderson, Connor Shields, Thomas Dyer, Bailey Brown, Coach Zach Odom, aleb Towe, Lake Hughes, Tyler Loyd, Chris Fletcher and Parker Grisham. Photo/Todd Forrest

headlined the second team.

Rounding out the Lady Panthers' remaining 8-AA firstteam selections are sophomore Avery Murray and senior Loralei Skinner.

The second team featured sophomores Zoe Crawford and Alanna Franklin, junior Alli Franklin and freshman Ariel McCarter. Honorable mention nods

went to sophomore Maggie Delatte, senior Savannah Evans, Salazar, Avary Smith-Foot and 1.78 WHIP. Madison Torres.

Tyler Loyd earned a first-team selection at third base. The Emmanuel signee led the Panthers with two homers and finished

second in doubles (six) and an honorable mention nod for Union's most dangerous hitter fourth in RBIs (15).

His .329 batting average and .481 slugging percentage were second best on the team, while an .881 OPS was good enough for third highest.

The 8-AA second team featured a trio of seniors: outfielder Thomas Dyer, first baseman Chris Fletcher and lefthanded pitcher Lake Hughes.

The ace of the staff, Hughes logged 37 2/3 innings, juniors Kaylee Helton, Italia compiling a 4.09 ERA and a Hughes averaged 7.3

On the diamond, senior strikeouts per 7 innings, and when opponents made contact, the senior limited batters to a 13% hard-hit rate.

Hughes was also awarded

his work as a leadoff hitter and outfielder.

Upon returning from basketball, Hughes quickly established himself as a prototypical leadoff hitter. His .495 on-base percentage, 29 runs, 25 walks and 22 steals (in 25 attempts) were all tops on the team. Dyer, who flanked

Hughes in the outfield and hit one spot behind him in the batting order, led the Panthers with a .333 average, a .529 slugging percentage and a .954 OPS.

Dyer's 29 hits, nine doubles and four triples were each team highs, while his 22 runs were tied for second-best and his 13 steals were fourth highest.

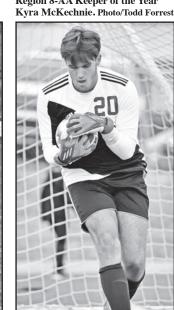
Additionally, he was

with runners in scoring position, hitting .410 with a .529 slugging

Fletcher emerged as one of Union's most consistent offensive weapons, leading the way with 17 hard-hit balls and coming in second with a 51.2 quality at-bat rate. His .333 average with runners in scoring position was the team's secondbest mark.

His 19 RBIs and five twobaggers were third most on the team to go with a .297/.372/.365 slash line. Defensively, he posted a .967 fielding percentage, committing just five errors in 147 chances.

Seniors Caleb Towe and



Region 8-AA Keeper of the Year Trent Baker. Photo/Todd Forrest

Logan Anderson each received honorable mention recognition for their 2022 contributions.

Anderson finished second First baseman Chris with one homer, 17 walks, 14 steals and six two-out RBIs. His .302 batting average, .429 onbase percentage, .384 slugging and .812 OPS were all top-five on the team.

> Last but not least, Towe ends his UCHS career on the heels of a productive senior season, stealing 14 bags and scoring 22 runs - each matching the second best total on the squad.

> For the year, Towe slashed 282/.364/.333 while covering all three outfield positions and working 8 1/3 innings on the



