

# Sports

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## Volleyball: Robinson's faith leads her to Truett-McConnell

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Over the past three years, Charlei Robinson has been a steady presence on the hardwood as a member of the Union County volleyball team. She will now be continuing her education and playing career at Truett McConnell University (TMU) in Cleveland.

TMU first caught Robinson's eye when she attended an overnight camp under then-head coach Mark Corbin, marking her first unofficial college visit.

"That was the first time I'd ever gotten onto a college campus, and it was such a nice experience," Robinson said. "Afterward, I emailed the coach, and he came to one of my tournaments. I think we got second place, so it was the perfect way to meet him. We stayed in touch, I attended another camp and eventually signed."

Robinson considered other schools, including Young Harris College, but ultimately chose Truett due to its Biblical-focused education.

"They are a Christian school that holds church services during practices," she said. "The [school's] focus is on Christianity, which I love very much."

Robinson concludes her time at Union County, where she put up impressive numbers in nearly every phase: 158 kills, 107 aces, 550 digs and 110 assists. During her senior season last fall, she achieved



Union County outgoing senior volleyball star Charlei Robinson, with family, during the April signing day ceremony at UCHS. Photo/Todd Forrest

99 kills, recorded 74 assists, 54 aces and 234 digs.

During a stretch in early September 2024, Robinson recorded a career-best 5 kills in a loss to Habersham Central. In Union's very next contest, she topped her 5-kill outing with a 6-kill performance in a win vs. Dawson County. Two games later, she notched another career-high courtesy of a 7-kill match during a win over Gilmer.

She totaled 12 kills over the last four matches of the regular season before picking

up 10 digs vs. Coahulla Creek to open the region tournament. Later in postseason play, she had 4 kills vs. North Murray and 6 kills in a 7-AA tourney loss to Sonoraville.

Union County closed the season by advancing to the Elite Eight for the first time since its 2021 Final Four appearance during Robinson's freshman year.

The Panthers went on to win 18 games in 2024, equaling the second most in program history (2021 and 2022) and doubling their win total from

the year before.

During her junior season in 2023, Robinson logged 239 digs, 59 kills, 33 assists and 31 aces while the team failed to reach the postseason, ending a five-year playoff run.

In 2022, Robinson's Panthers advanced to the Sweet 16 under first-year coach Megan Brown. Coming off the bench for most of the year, the sophomore tallied 24 aces and 77 digs.

Robinson is unsure about her major and is considering a career in chemistry



Charlei Robinson on the serve during Union County's Sweet 16 victory over Spencer in October. Photo/Todd Forrest

or biology. "I really want to thank my parents, Coach [Megan] Brown and Coach George [Miller]," she said. "Coach George is amazing. She pushed

me so hard to be a better player and made me feel so welcome on her club team."

Robinson was also a member of the UCHS wrestling team.

## Rooted in the Community, Rising in the Game: Young Harris Women's Basketball Courtney Davis

**Young Harris** - Young Harris Athletics' first student-athlete spotlight of the summer is Courtney Davis, a rising sophomore on the women's basketball team. Courtney is a local-student athlete, a graduate from Fanin County High School, who has made a significant impact in the Enchanted Valley in just her first year.

Get to know Courtney Davis on and off the court below!

In her freshman season, Davis played in 31 games, for a total of 575 minutes. She scored 262 points, racked up 14 steals, 34 assists, and 71 rebounds. She averaged eight and a half points per game and shot .436 from the floor.

Away from the court, Davis is a business administration major and is heavily involved with FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes). Although it is a few years away, after graduation she wants to give back and serve the community that has "poured into her" over the years, ultimately dedicating her life to serving others.

She would consider opening her own business, running the family business, or coaching.

Young Harris women's basketball head coach, Lindsey Huffman, speaks very highly on the first-year guard: "Courtney is one the hardest workers I have been around. Her love for the game and determination to be great is something I admire. She has such a great perspective and outlook on every challenge that comes her way. Courtney is a joy to coach because she always wants to improve and puts the team ahead of herself. She is fearless and wants to be challenged - she is a winner



Courtney Davis going hard on the court

in every sense of the word. I'm so grateful I get to be a small part of her journey!"

As a local student-athlete, representing this area means a lot to Courtney. Growing up, Courtney and her grandmother would attend Young Harris sporting events, and dream of the possibility of playing here. And she is doing just that. She feels that it is a privilege to play in front of familiar faces and loves her hometown community being able to support through her college journey.

One thing that most people don't know about Courtney is why she wears the number 23. She wears this number to honor her brother, who was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

His football season was cut short his senior year due to the diagnosis, and the number reminds her of his resilience he displayed after overcoming so many challenges.

Davis's favorite bible verse is also Psalm 23:4, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

What a first year for Courtney, who was able to experience a historic season as part of the Young Harris women's basketball program.

The squad finished 22-9 and made it all the way to the Conference Carolinas semifinals.

Her favorite memory from this past winter was defeating Chowan at the Harp, with an epic comeback in the fourth quarter. A moment she will "always remember."

Looking ahead to the 2025-2026 season, Courtney is looking forward to working hard yet again, with her sights set on bringing a conference championship back to the Enchanted Valley.

## Lady Panthers basketball camp to feature an All-Star cast of instructors

The Union County Lady Panthers and head coach Thomas Nelson will host a girls' basketball skills camp from June 17-19, welcoming rising 6th through 12th grade girls to participate in three days of focused training with experienced college coaches and former players.

The camp will run daily from 9 a.m. to noon at Union County High School. Registration is \$60 per athlete.

A strong lineup of collegiate coaches will lead the instruction, offering athletes a chance to sharpen their skills and learn from some of the region's top basketball minds.

The instructors include: Ronnie Carr, drafted by the Atlanta Hawks out of Western Carolina University. He made the first 3-point field goal in college basketball history (Nov. 29, 1980). Carr was a two-time All-Southern Conference and an All-Freshman team selection who averaged 18 points per game as a three-year starter. Led the conference in scoring in 1982 and scored 20 or more points in almost half of his games.

Allie Craig Cruce, Assistant Coach at Young Harris College, will be present for all three days.

Christian Buckmire, Assistant Coach at Piedmont University, will lead sessions on June 17.

Marcus Hunt Jr., Assistant Coach at Shorter University, will instruct on June 18.

Tiek Fields, Head Coach at Truett McConnell University, will coach on June 19.

This camp offers a valuable opportunity for young athletes to receive personalized instruction and build foundational skills heading into the upcoming basketball season.

To register or for more information, contact [tnelson@ucschools.org](mailto:tnelson@ucschools.org).



Union County head basketball coach Thomas Nelson and the Lady Panthers during last summer's team camp at the University of North Georgia. Photo/Todd Forrest



# Cheer: Small town atmosphere lures Vinez to Andrew College

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Recent Union County High School graduate Lucy Vinez is taking her athleticism, leadership and school spirit to the next level after inking a scholarship with Cuthbert's Andrew College during a singing day ceremony in April.

Vinez, a four-year member of the Union County football and basketball cheer squads, said the personal attention she received from the Andrew coaching staff made the decision easy.

"The coach reached out to me personally and told me he would love for me to be a part of his team," she said. "He gave me a personal tour of the college, and it really showed me that the program is like a family and that he really does care. It meant a lot that he took the time to show me the campus."

Vinez said she immediately felt at home on campus and was drawn to the small-town atmosphere.

"It was very homey, and [the coach] showed me where we would be practicing and what we'd be doing," she said. "It really seemed like a place I could call home. It's not a huge town, so it's something like



Union County outgoing-senior Lucy Vinez, surrounded by family and coaches, signs with Andrew College during April's signing day ceremony at UCHS. Photo/Todd Forrest

what I'm used to. Andrew just really stood out, and I don't know why, but I couldn't see myself going anywhere but there."

Union County cheer

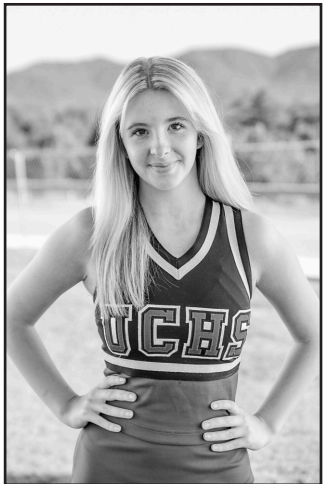
coach Emily Cobb praised Vinez for her persistence and growth during her signing day ceremony.

"We're proud of you," Cobb told Vinez during her

signing celebration. "We're proud of how hard you've worked and your determination. When we first started talking about college, you were so nervous and didn't

think you could do it. But I knew you could, and I'm over the moon excited for you.

"It looks like I'll be doing a lot of traveling on Saturdays because I can't wait



Lucy Vinez

to see you in action. Just go there and be you. Bring your talent to that squad. I told the coach the other day that you will be a huge asset to his entire team."

Vinez thanked her support system for helping her reach this milestone.

"I want to thank my friends and family for always supporting me," she said.

Vinez plans to major in elementary education with future dreams of becoming a primary school teacher.

Vinez follows in the footsteps of Union County's Class of 2024 gridiron stars Jensen Goble and Lane Lance, who signed with Andrew last spring.

# Cheer: Jayden Rogers seals the deal, inks scholarship to WCU

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Union County High School senior Jayden Rogers is headed to Western Carolina University, where she will join the Catamounts cheerleading squad this fall.

Rogers, a four-year football and basketball cheerleader and leader at UCHS, said Western Carolina has been her dream school since early in her high school career.

"I've always wanted to go to Western since I was a freshman," Rogers said. "I've watched them grow into the team that they are, and it seems like such a good atmosphere. I visited a few weeks ago and it kind of sealed the deal. The coach is very nice, and the teammates are very inviting — it felt right."

Despite considering other colleges, Rogers said Culowhee, North Carolina was only one place she wanted to cheer.

"I didn't consider cheering at other schools," she said. "I had some schools that I thought about, but I only wanted to cheer at Western. I'm excited to go to Western — it's a great school."

She also expressed gratitude for the support system that helped her along the way.

"I want to thank my mom," Rogers said. "She's always been there like a shadow



The Class of 2025's Jayden Rogers, surrounded by family, friends and teammates, during April's signing day ceremony at Union County High School. Photo/Todd Forrest

on the sideline."

Assistant athletic di-

rector Thomas Nelson emphasized the significance of Rogers' milestone.

"This is a great day for Union County High School and these students who are going on to represent our school at another place," Nelson said. "It's truly an honor to recognize not just an accomplishment but a journey filled with dedication, passion, and countless hours of hard work."

"Jayden has embodied all the qualities that make a great athlete — teamwork, leadership, perseverance.

From early morning practices to late night games, from bruises and sore muscles to the thrill of getting a perfect routine, this is a journey filled with highs and lows. But through it all, Jayden has shown what it truly means to be dedicated. She has represented our school with pride, energy, and spirit that leaves a long-lasting impact. We know she will continue to inspire, lead, and excel at Western Carolina."

Rogers is majoring in sports management.



Jayden Rogers and her mom on signing day. Photo/Todd Forrest

## Hunter named 7-AA Athletic Director of the Year

Congratulations to Union County High School AD Mandy Hunter for being named the Region 7-AA Athletic Director of the Year.

Her leadership, dedication, and commitment to our student-athletes and programs are second to none. UCHS is proud to see her recognized across the region for the outstanding work she does every day.

Hunter wins the award on the heels of Union County's first year in Region 7-AA. She has served as the UCHS athletic director since the start of the 2020-21 school year.

Along with UCHS, the region consists of Coahulla Creek, Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe, Murray County, North Cobb Christian, North Murray, Ringgold, Rockmart and Sonoma.





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UCHS GYM

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## Union's 10U Gunners continue to dominate



The Union County Gunners have wrapped up back-to-back undefeated season runs.

This season is a little special with it being a shutout season, meaning no goals were scored on us during regular season.

The stats for regular season are 74 goals, 27 assists, 16 saves, and 0 goals scored on us. The team entered into the Rec Round-up Tournament held in Cumming and Undefeated in the tournament and brought home a championship. Played a total of four games and scored 13 goals, 4 assists, 12 saves, and only 2 goals scored on us. This team worked extremely hard throughout the season to achieve this and we are excited to have represented Union County.

Head Coach Jared Burdine. Assistant Coach Sabrina Jackson. Players: Lillian Anderson, Justyna Barwick, Eliza Colwell, Charlotte Burdine, Eliza Burdine, Bristol Erwin, Haley Livingston, Maddox Miller, Sutton Miller and Makayla Stinton.



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