

Sports

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Five MGC gymnasts claim titles at AAU State Championships



L-R: Sofia Swartz, Mia McCombs, Hana Gregory, Erin Raper and Annalyse Kiernan. Each scored a 36 all around at the state championship to qualify for Regionals in Myrtle Beach, SC.



The AAU Gold team took sixth place. L-R: Lola Patton, Kaitlynn Tant, Madison Pelfrey, Josie Poston, Avery Frechette and Bre Arp.



MGC's Lola Patton (arms raised) was the AAU Gold All Around champ.



MGC's Reese Chambers (arms raised) was AAU Silver Beam champion.



MGC's Dakota Hogeback (arms raised) won state in three events.



MGC's Emma Schuette (left) was a Level 3 state champ on the vault.

By Todd Forrest
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Roswell - Eight state titles were brought home to Blairsville's Mountain Gymnastics Center following a superb performance at last month's AAU State Championships.

In the Gold division, Lola Patton picked up an All Around State Championship with a score of 36.525.

She placed second on the floor, third on the vault and bars, and fifth on the beam.

Overall her gold team placed sixth after Bre Arp and Avery Frechette each placed fifth all around, Josie Poston was seventh,

Madison Pelfrey came in eighth and Kaitlynn Tant was 12th.

Meanwhile, Dakota Hogeback left Roswell as a three-time state champ in the Silver division after recording the top score on the vault (9.675), the floor (9.3), and all around (37.9).

Hogeback finished second on the beam and third on the bars to round out her day.

Another Silver division competitor, Reese Chambers won a state title on the beam with a score of 9.475.

Chambers took third on the bars, fourth on the floor, sixth on the vault, and third all around.

Lillian Peacock picked up a pair of Level 3 state titles with a 9.425 on the beam and a 9.475

on the floor.

Her all around score of 37.65 was just shy of first place but good enough for a runner up finish.

Emma Schuette also went home a state champ after her vault score of 9.2 topped the field.

Schuette's third place finish on the beam and fifth place on the bars gave her a second place all around score of 35.

On May 13-14, four MGC gymnasts participated in the Southeast Region Championships in Myrtle Beach, SC and Mia McCombs' third place Platinum division finish on the bars was the team's best of the weekend.

The top all around Plati-

num division performance belonged to Erin Raper, who took home ninth.

In the Gold division, Sofia Swartz and Hana Gregory each placed ninth on the bars and beam, respectively.

Earlier in the spring, Raper was sixth, Swartz - seventh, Gregory - ninth, and McCombs - 10th at the USA Cartel State Championships in Cartersville. Annalyse Kiernan, who placed fourth all around, turned in MGC's strongest performance.

At the Level 2 State Championships in Gainesville, Adriana Viera was ninth all around, Kara Lodge was 14th all around and Millie Banks placed fourth on the floor.



MGC's Lillian Peacock (third from right) won state in two events.

Panthers reach semifinals of Flowery Branch's Battle at the Branch

By Todd Forrest
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Flowery Branch - The Union County football team earned the nickname "Giant Killer" at last week's Battle at the Branch 7-on-7 tournament hosted by Flowery Branch High School.

The FBHS stadium and two practice fields hosted non-stop, all day action as 15 teams took part in a five-game, pool play format, beginning at 9 a.m.

At the conclusion of pool play, a single elimination tournament was held to crown a champion and the Panthers fell three points short of a berth in the title game.

"Sometimes in these (7-on-7 tournaments) you get momentum on your side and things start to go your way," head coach Brian Allison said afterwards. "A bad call here, or a dropped pass there can put you in the right position to have some success."

Union received its "Giant Killer" moniker by playing the role of "David" in a tournament filled with Goliaths.

During the pool play segment, four of the Panthers' five games were against schools in a larger classification.

Then, later in the day, when the tournament was whittled down to eight teams in the quarterfinals - the Panthers (who compete in AAA with AA enrollment numbers) were by far, the smallest school remaining.

Two of the final eight were from Georgia's largest classification, AAAAAA, four belonged to AAAAAA, and one came from AAAAA.

Then there was Union County.

But the Panthers relished the role of underdog.

After taking out Class AAAAA's Madison County in a pool play rematch during the opening round, Union rallied past Lanier (AAAAAA) in the quarterfinals before falling to AAAAAAA powerhouse, and eventual tournament champion Archer in the semifinals.

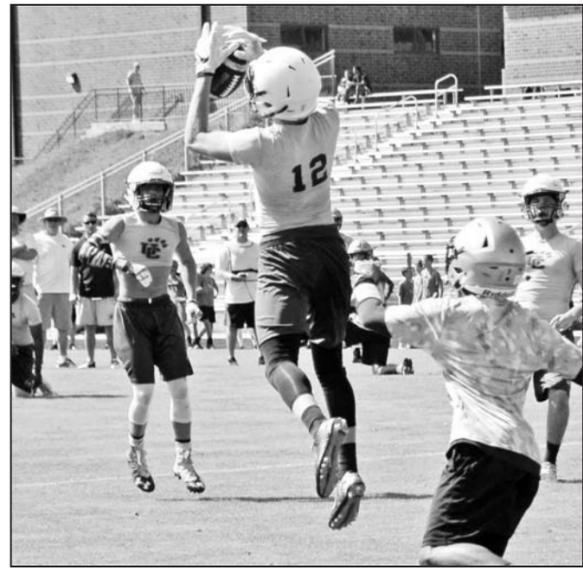
In pool play, Union opened with a tight loss to Madison



Riley Barrett (14) goes up for a Pierson Allison pass during UC's win over Flowery Branch. Photo/Todd Forrest



Chad Buzzard (24) is pushed out after a lengthy catch-and-run to set up a UC 1st-and-goal. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sean Dobbins (12) picks off a St. Pius pass attempt. Photo/Todd Forrest



Kyle Morlock with a late TD grab vs St. Pius X. Photo/Todd Forrest

County but responded with three consecutive wins.

Class AAAAA private school St. Pius X was the first victim, then the host Flowery Branch - under new head coach and former Union County player Ben Hall - were throttled by the Panthers.

The win streak was capped off with a victory over Atlanta's Booker T. Washington before pool play concluded with a disappointing loss to Oconee County.

"Those (tournaments) are

all about production; you have to score," Allison said. "When we got into bracket play, I don't think we had a series where we didn't score and that will give you a chance to be successful."

"We were excited because we've never made it that far in one of those tournaments before and we did it against bigger schools."

The Panthers offense was led by returning quarterback Cole Wright, with backup Pierson Allison also seeing action throughout the day.

The receiving corps were anchored by rising seniors Austin Pattee, Logan Dyer and Riley Barrett as well as rising juniors Sean Dobbins, Kanon Hemphill and Chayton Schafer.

Sophomores Kyle Morlock and Sawyer Drake also hauled in touchdown passes for Union County.

Morlock snared the game winner on a post pattern in the back of the end zone vs St. Pius X.

In the opener vs Madison County, Drake was the recipient

of a check down with Wright that he took to the house from more than 30 yards out.

Although running plays, quarterback scrambles, and screen passes are not allowed in 7-on-7 play, running backs Cole Dockrey and Chad Buzzard were able to gather a few receptions out of the backfield.

Defensively, rising senior linebacker RJ Banton patrolled the middle of the field while Dobbins, Allison, Dockrey and other members of the secondary were able to use the tournament

to refine their cover skills.

"One thing I liked about our defense was we didn't give up any big plays, kept everything in front of us and forced teams to drive, for the most part," Coach Allison said.

This Friday, Union will participate in a 7-on-7 tournament at Habersham Central High School at 9 a.m.

According to Coach Allison, the Panthers will attempt to take a varsity and junior varsity squad to Habersham on Friday.