

Sports

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UCHS Cross Country off and running

By Todd Forrest
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As Coach Jackie Hughes and her Union County Cross Country teams completed it's opening day of practice, the seniors huddled the runners together and dismissed them with "one, two, three, State."

Coach Hughes and her team's goals are clear. "We're going to state," Coach Hughes emphasized throughout practice.

The boys and girls squads were both off and running in the early stages of practice, utilizing the track and all of the Union County campuses.

"They ran three-and-a-half miles," Coach Hughes said. "I put them on the track and we have a one mile course that goes around the schools. Just to get a good look at where they are at."

Union County's Boys lost Tucker Belton, Alex Bowen, Alex Drost, and Evans Ferrell to graduation but the cupboard isn't completely bare for Coach Hughes.

"We lost four of our top five runners from last year," Coach Hughes explained. "But we kept Jeremy Webb who qualified and ran state last year. We also keep Jacob Cook and Will Stone, who were in our top seven."

The girls return most of their team from 2011 and have plenty of freshmen ready to step up.



Boys and Girls Cross Country Coach Jackie Hughes addresses her team during the team's first practice. Photo/Todd Forrest

"The girls, we didn't graduate a whole lot," Coach Hughes said. "We should be okay because we have a lot of young talent coming up from eighth grade. They should fill in nicely with what we have coming back from last year. So I'm really curious."

Following the running, the team stretched, ran 50 yard sprints, abs and core conditioning, including bicycle kicks and push ups.

"We worked on strength and conditioning," Coach Hughes said. "We're going to keep doing that for the first few weeks. We'll start out with three mile runs, then move up to three and a half, four, and so on. Ultimately, I want to get where they can do a seven- or eight-mile run, then they can begin improving on their speed."

"We will continue to add to the mileage after the first two weeks, add some tempo runs which are just a little bit under race pace, and steady runs, it'll be a combination of many things," she said.

The season opens on Aug. 30 at Meeks Park but until the starting gun fires, Coach Hughes will use both the school and the park for practice.

"For the most part, Mondays will be at the track doing speed work. The rest of the week will be at Meeks Park," she said. "After picture day on Wednesday, we will have a routine of being at the track on Mondays and at the Park for the rest of the week."

After the season starts, Union County will have a meet nearly every week up until the Region Tournament in early

November.

And Coach Hughes is ready to get things rolling, but remains cautious regarding the new-look Region 8-AA.

"I am excited," Coach Hughes said. "I've got a lot of new men and women coming out. I don't know what that's going to lead to and we have a whole new region. Other than Jefferson and Rabun, I don't know what anyone has."

At the end of the day, Coach Hughes and her seniors know that you must prepare yourself mentally and physically for the long, grueling Cross Country season.

"Go to your seniors for advice," Coach Hughes told her younger runners. "Talk to them about anything because they've been through it."

She also advised her team to drink plenty of water and maintain a consistent diet of water, protein, fruits, and vegetables.

"Water, water, water," Coach Hughes shouted.

The Union County coach, whose teams own a combined 12 state Top 10 appearances and an individual State Championship, also took a few moments to pound in the importance of stretching.

"If you get sore because you didn't stretch properly or didn't start drinking water until practice, don't come to me complaining because you're sore," Hughes said sternly. "Take stretching seriously, and you seniors need to make sure they take it seriously."



Core and ab conditioning during Cross Country practice. Photo/Todd Forrest.



50-yard sprints on the opening day of Cross Country practice. Photo/Todd Forrest

UCHS' 100 Inning Softball Game continues to thrill

By Todd Forrest
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Good times weren't hard to find last weekend at Union County High School's Sixth Annual 100-inning Softball Game.

The game is held the last Saturday before the regular season and is used to raise money for uniforms and equipment for the Lady Panthers' softball team.

The two-time defending Region 8-AA Champion Lady Panthers' squad faced off against an assortment of alumni, family, coaches, friends, the media, and former teammates of all ages.

The atmosphere was festive early until the competitiveness that runs through those veins that hold purple and gold blood kicked in. From then on, the battle was on for county bragging rights.

After falling behind early, the challengers, aka: "Panther Legends" or "Old Timers," depending on who you asked, were given a boost with the arrival of Jim and Angie Hughes. The addition of Angie's softball prowess and Jim's coaching and motivation, mostly done from the bleachers, was enough to propel the challengers to a 17-16 victory.

Sophomore Haylle King



Friends, family, alumni, and fans of all ages joined the Lady Panthers for it's 100 Inning Softball Game

kept the Lady Panthers in the game with two homers, and just missed a third. "What have you been feeding her?" someone shouted to her father Bobby King who was playing right field.

Senior Shawna Brown also went deep, sending a shot over the center field fence, while her opponents, that included her mother Teresa and brother Andrew, watched from the infield as she rounded the bases and was mobbed by her teammates at home plate. Nevertheless, the Lady Panther rally in the bottom of the 100th came up just short.

The bats of Angie Hughes, Kaitlyn Seabolt, Coach Jessica Stewart, Coach Jennifer Cagle, Leslie Hughes,

Candi Busbee, Kimberly Smith, Sharon Arnold, and others, combined with the glove-work of Bobby King, Johnny Garrett, Jason Hughes and Hunter Hughes were too much for the home team.

Despite some attempts to bend the rules by both sides, trash talking, and some rough play at times, everyone went home with a smile on their faces and for some of the "old-timers" it was straight to the doctor, massage therapist, or a date of destiny with an ice pack.

The current group of Lady Panthers weren't afraid to mix it up with their former teammates and refused to be bullied.

"Panther Legend" Mat-

raca McKim took home a knot on the chin after a collision with UCHS' Melissa Arnold at first base. Then Lady Panther sophomore catcher, Courtney Busbee, in attempt to block the plate, showed another "Panther Legend" Kaitlyn Seabolt why you don't slide into home with shorts on. However, Seabolt, was ruled safe, by whoever happened to be the umpire at the time. Although, most close calls were determined by which side argued their case the loudest. Regardless, Seabolt will wear a nice "strawberry" on the back of her leg for a few days for her nifty slide around Busbee's tag.

Jay Stroman, father of

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Hunter Hughes avoids a tag from Courtney Busbee during the early stages of the game. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Lady Panther players awaiting their turn at bat. Photo/ Jennifer Cagle

The Stance Begins the Process

Last week in tips we looked at what many golf instructors believe is the "DNA" of the golf swing and that is the issue of balance. Without proper balance, a golfer has a poor chance of making a good solid golf swing. The rub of that concept is that there are many influencing factors that can affect your balance throughout the entire swing.

If you would allow me to indulge myself, and our most excellent editor approves, I would like to spend the next few weeks discussing the swing from the ground up. This way we can look at the swing as a whole and not just in parts.

When starting out as a beginner or trying to find the source of your flaws, one must look at the basics of the swing. Professional golfers often find that their individual problems are corrected by working on basics. This may seem trivial but basics are extremely important.

The stance is the first basic I would like to "address" as we begin our journey down the path to the correct golf swing.

To achieve the proper stance, one must first align the tips of your toes parallel to the target line. The target line is the desired path you want the ball to travel on, so choose it wisely. There is no drill to correct carelessness.

Next, place your feet a little less than shoulder width apart and stand straight up from the ground with your back as straight as your spine will allow. From this position, keep your legs straight and bend from the waist so that your arms hang loose under the shoulders. Bring your hands together to a point directly under your chin and this will indicate where the grip of the club will fit.

At this point, you should feel as though the upper body is "heavy" or leaning out over the ball and that your balance is forward. This is what happened to poor Charles Barkley. This is what makes you "over the top" on the downswing.

Here is the crucial step for all golfers in finding the proper stance. While trying to keep the very bottom of the spine back over the heels, bend the knees until you feel your center of gravity align over your ankles. This will place you in the athletic position that will allow you to return the club head to its original position on the downswing. At this point, you should not feel as though you are leaning backward or forward but balanced completely on both feet. Imagine a balanced shortstop in baseball preparing to move left or right to field a ground ball and that feeling will tell you that your stance is correct.

It is very important that you maintain this center of balance as you start the downswing because the force you create from the top combined with the weight of your arms will try to pull you into the ball at impact. This ability to resist getting "heavy" over the ball is what separates a proper swing from a faulty one.

Practice this at home or at the range before your next outing and if you find your balanced stance, and hold it throughout the swing, you will find the fairway much more often.

Good luck and I will see you at the course!



Joe Collins

Tips from the Range

UCHS 2012 Football Schedule

- Aug. 17 Meet the team
- Aug 23 @ White County (Scrimmage)
- Aug 31 @ Towns County
- Sept 7 vs Fannin County (Recognizing the 1957 Panthers)
- Sept 14 vs Andrews, NC (Recognizing Middle School Team)
- Sept 21 - Bye Week
- Sept 28 vs Washington Wilkes (Recognizing Rec Dept Teams)
- Oct 5 @ Oglethorpe County
- Oct 12 vs Riversville Military Academy (Homecoming)
- Oct 19 @ Greene County
- Oct 26 @ Rabun County
- Nov 2 vs Social Circle (Senior Night)
- Nov 9 @ Jefferson

UCHS August Softball Schedule

- Aug. 7 vs Lumpkin County (Scrimmage)
- Aug. 10-11 @ Lanier Point Tournament
- Aug. 14 @ Washington-Wilkes
- Aug. 20 @ Gilmer County
- Aug. 21 vs Oglethorpe County
- Aug. 22 vs Lumpkin County
- Aug. 23 @ Rabun County
- Aug. 28 vs Jefferson
- Aug. 30 @ Greene County

UCMS 2012 Football Schedule

- Aug. 16 @ North Georgia Academy
- Aug. 23 vs Rabun County
- Aug. 30 vs White County
- Sept. 6 @ West Hall
- Sept. 13 @ Towns County
- Sept. 20 vs Copper Basin
- Sept. 27 @ Lumpkin County
- Oct. 4 Playoffs
- Oct. 13 Championship game

Quarterback Club Report

Gold Cards now available

The QB Club started its Gold Card campaign with huge sales

Several Union County football players got together and sold Gold Cards Saturday morning at Wal-Mart.

Even though it meant rising early on a Saturday morning, it was well worth the time as nearly each football player sold their allotment.

Thanks to Dan Walts and Tony Stewart for their ideas and permission to set up outside the doors of Wal-Mart.

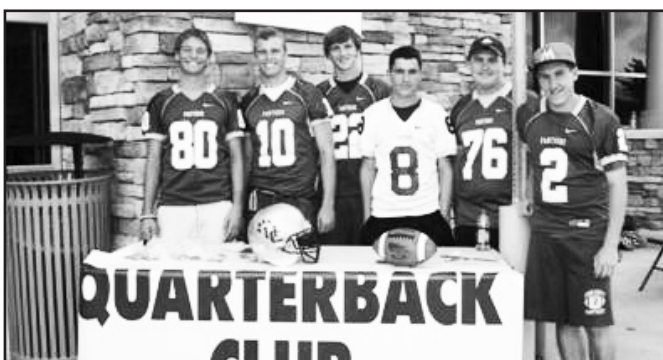
The proceeds from the Gold Cards pay for the players' summer football camps, play-

ers' equipment and apparel, away game meals, new headsets for sideline game communication, practice equipment, HVAC for the locker room, and other school facility improvements.

Special thanks to David Prunier for bringing the boys doughnuts and to Gary Rogers, Rob Dobbins and Richard Hougrand for their support and attendance at the sale.

The Panthers will be back at Wal-Mart this Saturday selling Gold Cards.

Gold Cards are \$10 each and provide discounts at nearly 20 local businesses.



UC Football players sell Gold Cards outside of Wal Mart.