

Union County Wrestling continues to build momentum at KOTM

By Todd Forrest
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Union County Wrestling Coaches Michael Smith-Foot, Bob Williams, Justin Byers, and Art McCann clearly have things going in the right direction following Towns County's two-day wrestling extravaganza known as the King of the Mountain.

"If you want to be the best someday, you've got to wrestle the best," Coach Smith-Foot said. "It was great to see some of the teams here like Banks County. They are a State Champion. Dacula, Dawson, are top tier competition. Towns County is always solid in (Class) A. So it's nice to have a tournament like this where you don't have to drive far to see stiff competition."

The Panthers finished 14th place after having to forfeit the 120 and 106-pound weight classes.

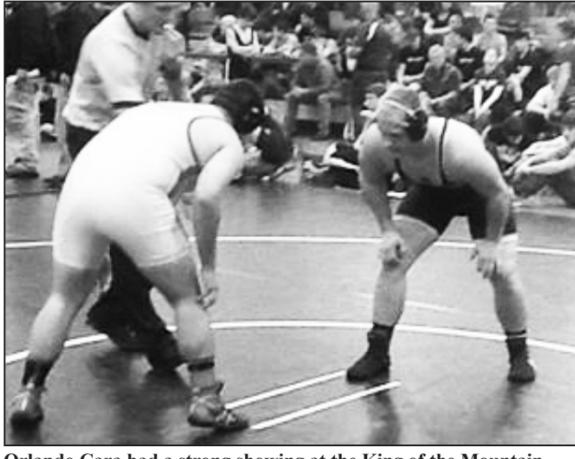
Despite not reaching its goal of placing at least three wrestlers in the Top 4, Coach Smith-Foot's squad is still young.

"We were going into it with the idea that we would have three, maybe four placers so only having one is a little disappointing," Coach Smith-Foot said. "We had some really tough draws at the beginning."

"We're still young. And when we make mistakes, they are big ones. They aren't one



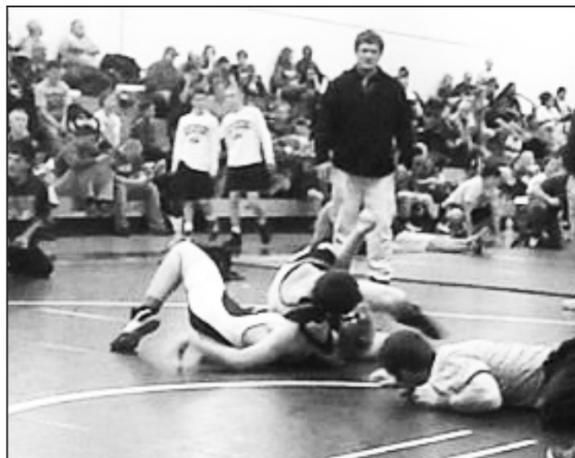
Tulsa Queen picked up two wins in the 195-pound weight class.



Orlando Cara had a strong showing at the King of the Mountain.

point mistakes. They are three and four point mistakes. But considering how young our team is, I think we did exceptionally well."

The highlight of the tournament for the Panthers was sophomore Justin Eigel's fourth place finish in the 170-pound weight class.



Justin Eigel scores a pin. He would go on to take fourth at 170 pounds

"He dropped down from 182 and will probably wrestle at 170 the rest of the season," Coach Smith-Foot said.

Union County's Orlando Lara won his first four matches before falling to the eventual runner-up in the 220-pound division.

Lara finished the tournament with a 4-2 record.

Payton Tumey competed in two matches at 113 pounds, Kyle English at 120, Chase Stancil at 138, Nick White at 152, and Dylan Byers won a match by fall at 160.

Chase Barnett picked up a win in the 182-pound division, Tulsa Queen had two wins at 195 pounds.

"Everything we do up until Area and Sectionals is just practice," Coach Smith-Foot said. "So if we're going

to make mistakes, I'd rather make them now."

On Friday, the Panthers will be back in Hiawassee for the Towns County Duals Tournament.

Next Tuesday, Union will challenge the mighty Gilmer County from Class AAAA.

"They are a multi-time State Champion and most schools don't even want to go over there, but we're going over there just to get better," Coach Smith-Foot said.

The postseason will open for Panther wrestling in January. On Jan. 3rd and 4th Union County will compete in the team Area Tournament.

In February, the individual Area Tournament will take place before the ultimate goal of reaching Section-

als and finally the Gwinnett Center for State beginning on Feb. 13th.

"We've got several kids who are still out, several kids who haven't made weight yet," Coach Smith-Foot said. "We still have about five kids that need to make one more drop to get to the weight classes they're supposed to be at."

"Right now, we are better than we were at this time last year. Last year we had to forfeit five or six weight classes. This year we're only forfeiting two. I'm hoping to have everyone at the weight class they should be at with the lowest body fat."

The potential of Union's program has even caught the eye of Towns County Head Wrestling Coach Jeff Stowers.

"Coach Foot and Coach Williams have done a great job at Union County," Coach Stowers said. "They have gotten that program going in the right direction with tons of kids coming out. They have done a heck of a job over there."

As for next year, Coach Stowers is looking to expand the tournament from 21 to 32 teams.

"It's all about helping wrestling grow in this area," he said. "I want to see Towns County successful. Obviously. But I also want to see wrestling be successful in this area."

Lady Panthers rout Andrews, Lumpkin

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The Union County Lady Panthers easily picked up wins number two and three last week.

First they disposed of Andrews, NC for the second time by a score of 47-12.

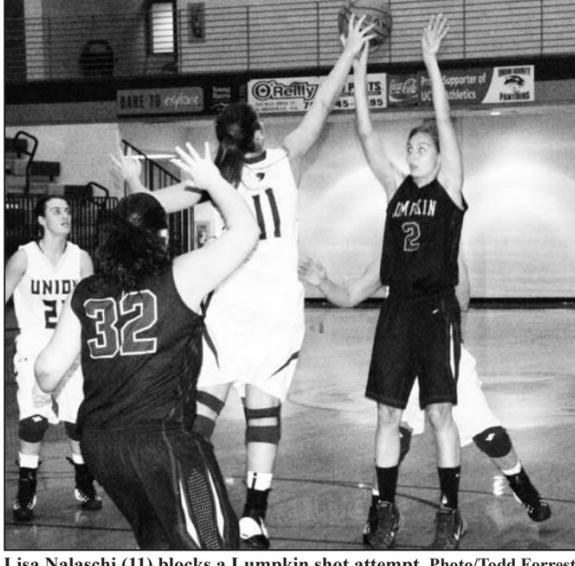
On Friday they took on Lumpkin County who is under the leadership of new Head Coach Matthew Youngblood, who played for Towns County from 1993-97.

However, there wasn't much he could do to stop the Union onslaught.

Lisa Nalaschi led the Lady Panthers in scoring with 16 points to go along with 6 boards.

Kaitlyn Day connected four times from long distance en route to a 14 point performance. The junior sharpshooter added 5 boards and 4 steals.

Layne Colwell had 6 points, Brooke Maddox had six, Ariel Maurer scored 3 points



Lisa Nalaschi (11) blocks a Lumpkin shot attempt. Photo/Todd Forrest with 5 blocks, 4 assists, and 3 steals. Madison Rich had 3 points and 3 assists, and Allie Stroman had 2 points.

Union faces Lumpkin in

Dahlonega on Tuesday and goes to White on Friday. On Saturday the Lady Panthers aim for six straight over rival Fannin County at 4:30 p.m.

Union holds off Andrews, fall to Lumpkin

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With football season over for Andrews, NC, the Panthers had their handsful with the Wildcats on Tuesday.

The Panthers would eventually escape with the 50-45 victory after trailing 10-7 and 26-25 at the breaks.

"They are a physical team and one of the best Andrews squads that I've seen in a while," Union Head Coach Casey Jones said.

Kyle Hamby led the Panthers with 16 points with a 6-for-6 performance from the line in the fourth quarter. Dylan Coyne had 12, Tyler Odom had eight before fouling out, Lake Arnick scored seven, Hunter Hughes had six, and Ralston Drake added a free throw.

On Friday, the Panthers fell to the unbeaten Lumpkin County Indians.

The Indians took com-



Hunter Hughes takes a charge against Lumpkin. Photo/Todd Forrest with a 32-14 lead at the intermission and never looked back in a 59-40 game.

Coyne had 10 points and

6 boards. Arnick scored 7 points, Hughes and Matthew Wasko had 6 points. Hamby added 2 points and 4 assists.

NASCAR 2013

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Car number 3 returns in 2014

The black No. 3 will return to the Sprint Cup Series after an absence of 13 years, with Austin Dillon behind the wheel.

The last time it was driven was during the 2001 Daytona 500.

Dale Earnhardt Sr. was the driver.

It was his last race, and the last time the number was used during a Cup race.

Earnhardt won six of his seven championships and got 67 of his 76 career Cup victories in No. 3. He was racing it when he died on the last lap of the 500. Since then, RCR has retained rights to the number but hasn't used it in Sprint Cup.

Millions of NASCAR fans still respect that number.

The number had a long history even before Earnhardt got it at RCR in 1984. Hall of Fame driver/owner Junior Johnson used it during parts of 1962, 1963 and 1964; Childress used it between 1976 and mid-1981, the final years of his Cup career.

Earnhardt first ran the number at Michigan in August of 1981, soon after Childress quit driving to concentrate on running his team. Ricky Rudd used the number in 1982 and 1983, giving RCR its first two victories, before Earnhardt returned to RCR from Bud Moore Engineering in 1984.

Dillon drove No. 3 to a dozen Truck Series poles and five victories in 55 career starts. He was the 2010 Rookie of the Year, the 2011 Most Popular Driver and the 2011 series champion. RCR gave him No. 3 for the Nationwide Series, where he was the 2012 Rookie of the Year and the 2013 champion, winning 10 poles and two races in 77 starts.

CHASE ELLIOTT GETS SECOND SNOWBALL WIN

Chase Elliott, who started on the pole won Sunday's 300-lap Snowball Derby at Five Flags Speedway. He also won Saturday night's Snowflake 100, becoming the first driver to sweep both races.

Unofficial top-10: Erik Jones finished second, followed by Grant Enfinger, Austin Theriault, Hunter Robbins, John Hunter Nemechek, David Rogers, Kyle Benjamin, Ross Kenseth, and Derek Thorn.

TIGHTER COMPETITION IN NASCAR RACES

NASCAR Chairman Brian France said one of the organization's 2014 goals is to improve the quality of racing.

"We're after some interesting changes to the rules packages," he said. "You've heard me say this for a while now, and we'll be validating some of our beliefs, a prior test and other things, and I'm liking what I'm seeing. It's tightening up competition, and that's hallmark. We wake up every day and try to do that."

"The 43 teams probably do just the opposite. They try to get up in the morning, look at our rules package and want to lead every lap and gain the system. That's how it works, right? So we're trying to figure that out in a bigger, smarter way, and hopefully we will accomplish that."

This past season marked the Gen-6 car's debut. France noted at the beginning of the season that officials would measure the car's success on a variety of areas, including lead changes, how well it races and how drivers feel about it.

Lead changes were up slightly in 2013 from 2012. There were 700 lead changes this past season and 679 in 2012. That's less than one more lead change per race in 2013.

"The number one thing we had to judge in the Gen-6 car was acceptance by the manufacturers, the teams and the drivers," France continued. "That's the number one thing. And then obviously we want to get more lead changes and we want to get closer, tighter competition."

JOHNSON HONORED FOR SIXTH CHAMPIONSHIP

Jimmie Johnson was honored for his sixth NASCAR Sprint Cup Series championship celebration last Friday night in Las Vegas.

Johnson and the No. 48 Hendrick Motorsports Lowe's Chevrolet team's streak of five titles ended in 2011 and they missed the title a year ago.

"The streak, when it was alive, I didn't realize how much pressure we were carrying on our shoulders. We almost didn't get to enjoy the moment," he said. "We were looking ahead to see what the next year would be."

"This (year) is almost a starting over. We're just enjoying



Car No. 3 returns to Cup Series with Austin Dillon as driver.

for what it is."

The two seasons away from the head table provided some of the impetus for what Johnson calls "a kick-butt year" in which he won six races. Two victories during the Chase were keys to Johnson emerging victorious from a dramatic and tension-filled battle with 2003 NASCAR Sprint Cup champion Matt Kenseth.

Johnson is one championship away from matching the seven NASCAR Sprint Cup titles won by NASCAR Hall of Famers Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt.

Tony Stewart was honored by the National Motor Sports Press Association (NMPA) as a fierce competitor, championship team owner and race track promoter.

The NMPA Myers Brothers Award is presented in the names of pioneer NASCAR competitors Billy and Bobby Myers. Past recipients are a virtual who's-who of the industry - drivers, owners, track operators, sponsors and members of the media - and include nearly every current member of the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

Stewart was cited for a longtime body of work - and specifically for his role in taking NASCAR back to its roots. He and his staff at Eldora Speedway in Rossburg, Ohio, produced the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series "Mudsummer Classic," the first national points race on a dirt surface in more than four decades.

Stewart's 2013 season was cut short by a broken leg suffered in a sprint car accident in early August. He crossed the stage on Thursday without the aid of crutches to accept his award and should be ready to battle for his fourth Cup title when the 2014 season opens with February's Daytona 500.

"It was hard sitting on the sidelines watching," he said. "It's given me a different perspective."

Barringer hits 7 treys; JV teams sweep Towns

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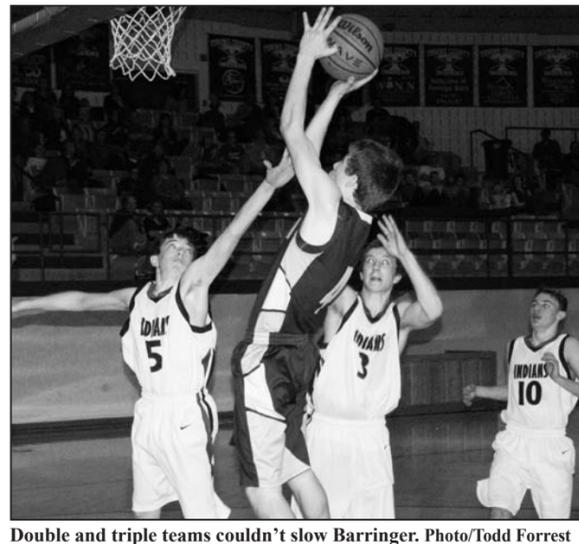
Hiawassee - Freshman Lawson Barringer scored 31 points on 7 threes to lead Union to a 65-28 win over Towns County. His 7 treys are believed to possibly be a Union County boys JV record.

Chase Shook chipped in 14 points for the Panthers.

The shooting performance even brought Union County Varsity Coach Casey Jones out of the locker rooms early to check out his future star.

The Lady Panthers' JV unit held off Towns County 38-33 in the 3 p.m. game.

Kim Coyne led the Lady Panthers with 15 points.



Double and triple teams couldn't slow Barringer. Photo/Todd Forrest

Union County Recreation's Christmas CLASH

December 20/21, 2013

Friday night

Rec Gym - 302 School Cir Rd

5:30 10UB White Co VS Heat

6:30 10UB White Co VS Runnin' Wild

7:30 10UB White Co VS Gremlins

Saturday

Rec Gym - 302 School Cir Rd

10:00 10UB Towns VS Yetis

11:00 10UB Towns VS Tar Heels

12:00 10UG Towns VS Panthers

1:00 10UG Towns VS Shooting Stars

Entrance into any of the games is a non-perishable food item or a cash donation. All food and money collected will go to assist the Union County Food Bank.

Friday night

Rubber Gym - 310 Wellborn St

5:30 10UG White Co VS Heat

6:30 10UG White Co VS Lady Dawgs

7:30 12UG White Co VS Rising Stars

Saturday

Rubber Gym - 310 Wellborn St

10:00 12UB Towns VS Tar Heels

11:00 12UB Fannin Co. VS Trotters

12:00 12UB Fannin Co. VS Dawgs

1:00 12UB Fannin Co VS Heat

2:00 12UB Fannin Co VS Panthers

3:00 12UG Towns Co VS Heat

4:00 12UG Towns Co VS Fast Break