

Sports

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Panthers conclude roller-coaster week with 91-36 rout of Fellowship

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No. 9 Union County picked up a critical 85-71 region victory at No. 10 Banks County on Tuesday, Jan. 23, but gave one back Friday at Athens Academy before returning to form in a 91-36 blowout of Fellowship Christian on Saturday in Blairsville.

On the same night the Panthers (17-4, 4-2) fell flat in Athens, Banks suffered an upset loss at Fellowship Christian, setting up a three-way tie atop the region standings between Athens Academy, Banks County and Union County.

With the shakeup in 8-AA, Union dropped to 10th in the latest Class AA rankings, while Athens Academy moved back into the top-10 at No. 9 with Banks unranked.

Despite Friday's setback, the Panthers control their own destiny in 8-AA and would host the region tournament as the top seed by winning their last four games. However, Union County will need a home win over Banks County on Tuesday, followed by another home victory vs. East Jackson, then take care of business during Saturday's trip to Providence. The regular season concludes with a Feb. 6 visit to Fellowship Christian.

No. 9 Panthers 85, No. 10 Banks County 71 - Union County left Homer with a W for the first time in 11 years, overcoming a 31-16 second-quarter deficit to pull away from the Leopards after halftime.

"That first quarter, I was thinking here we go again," said head coach Corey Garrett, whose team hadn't won in Homer in 12 years. "But unlike other years when we've fallen behind [at Banks], this time I had a feeling we would make a run."

Banks County jumped out front 20-6 ahead of a 24-10 advantage after a quarter. The Leopards grew the lead to 29-14 and 31-16 before Union closed the half on a 21-7 run to pull within 38-37 at the break.

Down 15 at the 4:46 mark of the second, Cade Dockrey's one-hander in the paint jumpstarted the Union rally. On the next possession, freshman Jaxon Totherow, who poured in a career-high 22 points, knocked down two free throws, moving the Panthers within 11 at 31-20.

A Banks County turnover led to Dockrey's baseline drive and a 9-point deficit, then Henry moved Union within six with his coast-to-coast and-



Junior Houston Henry led the way with 27 at Banks and 20 vs. Fellowship Christian. Photo/Todd Forrest with 3:14 left in the half.

Hughes answered a Leopards' 3 with one of his own, then a Henry trey trimmed the margin to 36-31 before Hughes found Henry for an up-and-under layup with 1:20 on the clock.

Hughes' 3 tied the game at 36-36, but Banks answered inside and Totherow split two free throws for a 38-37 score.

Trailing 42-41 early in the second, the Panthers' first lead of the night came at 44-42 when Dockrey found Henry up ahead for a layup and a free throw. Jude Ellis' fadeaway from 12 extended the lead to 46-43, then buckets from Dockrey and Totherow grew the margin to 50-43, prompting a Leopards timeout.

"We knew going in we could attack them on the baseline and we felt like [Totherow and Kaden Combs] had an advantage inside," Garrett said.

A pair of baskets by Dockrey plus one each from Henry and Hughes handed Union County a 58-47 lead with 13 seconds left in the quarter. Banks County's long 3 at the third-quarter horn sparked its final run of the night, narrowing the gap to 61-57 early in the fourth.

But Henry and Totherow helped Union grow its lead back to double digits when Totherow scored on a putback near the 6-minute mark, then came up with a steal and hit Henry for a fast-break layup.

"Our 2-3 (zone) and full court pressure took them out of rhythm," Garrett said. "A lot of teams are afraid to play them in zone because of how well they shoot the ball."

Two Henry free throws and two baskets from Totherow grew Union's advantage to 71-57. With 3:39 left, Totherow split two from the line, awarding the Panthers its largest lead of the night at 72-57.

Henry's driving finger-roll maintained the 15-point difference at 74-57 and Totherow put the Leopards away with his inside bucket near the 1:30 mark.

Along with his career-best scoring night, Totherow logged a career-high 4 steals to go with 9 rebounds on 9-of-13 shooting. Henry recorded a team-high 27 points with 10 rebounds and 3 assists.

Banks County's Kolby Watson led all scorers with 28 points.

Dockrey's 17 points matched a career-high coming in last year's trip to Banks County. The sophomore pulled down 3 boards, dished out 3 assists and added 2 steals.

Hughes ended with 13 points, 8 rebounds and 3 steals; Ellis had 2 points, 2 boards and 2 steals; junior Maddox Young had 4 points; Combs added 3 rebounds and a steal.

Team stats: Union County shot 48% (29-60) from the floor, 76% (22-29) at the line and 31% (5-16) from 3-point range. Banks County hit 43% (29-68) overall, 83% (5-6) at the line and 23% (8-35) from deep.

Union out-rebounded Banks County 42-28 and won points in the paint 48-38. The turnover battle ended even at 19-19.

No. 9 Panthers 91, Fellowship Christian 36 - Union County put the visiting Pala-



Freshman Jaxon Totherow scored a career-high 22 points in Union's first win at Banks County since Jan. 2012. Photo/Todd Forrest

dins away early with 8-0 run off the opening tip en route to a 28-9 advantage after 8 minutes.

The Panthers expanded their lead to 47-15 at the break and 75-28 after three quarters.

Henry scored 8 of his game-high 20 points during Union's first-quarter onslaught. Dockrey scored six in the frame; Ellis and Combs chipped in five apiece. Henry had eight more in the second, while Hughes and Ellis added 4 points apiece, spotting the Panthers a 32-point halftime margin.

"Hearing about the Fellowship win over Banks on Friday night was a bit of a wakeup call for our guys," Garrett said. "We might have been overlooking them a bit, but after the loss to Athens and Fellowship beating Banks, we knew we needed to bring our A-game on Saturday."

"I also think it might have been a boost for our guys knowing Banks lost, because even after the Athens loss, we still walked out of there in a tie for first and in control of our own destiny."

Along with his 12th game of the season with at

least 20 points, Henry added 6 assists, 5 rebounds and 5 steals. Ellis had 16 points, 6 rebounds, 5 steals and 3 assists.

Hughes finished with 14 points, 3 boards, 3 steals and an assist. Dockrey scored 10 points with 4 rebounds and 3 assists. Combs had 7 points, 4 steals, 2 rebounds and a block. Young ended his night with 6 points, 5 rebounds, 3 assists and a steal. Freshman Ethan Hogsed had 6 points, 3 rebounds, 3 assists and one steal. Totherow finished with 4 points, 6 boards and a steal.

Sophomore Vince Marevka had 4 points; sophomore Holden Payne finished with 2 points, an assist and a steal; Ryland Chambers added 2 points and one steal.

Freshman Hayden Price and sophomore Kainen Shirley pulled down one rebound each.

Union's 91-point scoring output is the most by a Panthers' team since January 2008 -- a 94-61 win over Banks County.

Team stats: Union County hit 49% (34-70) from the floor, 62% (13-21) at the line and 37% (10-27) from deep. Fellowship shot 15-56

(27%) overall, 4-6 (67%) at the charity stripe and 2-15 (13%) from 3-point range.

Union won the rebound battle 40-37 and held a 48-26 scoring edge in the paint. The Panthers forced 35 turnovers and committed 13.

No. 9 Panthers 45, Athens Academy 75 - Union County never left the starting gate during a one-sided loss in the Classic City on Friday night.

"My hat's off to them, [Athens] came out ready to play and we didn't," Garrett said. "It's not that Athens did anything different than they've always done, or that we did something different, they just executed and we didn't."

The Spartans stormed ahead 27-12 after one and held a 35-19 lead in the second before closing with 9 straight to drop the Panthers into a 44-19 halftime deficit.

Union County couldn't gain any ground in the third as Athens outscored Union 21-16 in the period and took a 65-35 lead into the fourth.

Ellis led the Panthers with 10 points, 2 assists, a rebound and a steal. Young added 8 points and 5 rebounds; Combs had 8 points and 4 boards; Dockrey finished with 5 points, 3 assists and 3 steals; Hughes had 4 points and 3 rebounds.

Henry had a season-low 3 points with 3 steals and an assist. Payne had 3 points and one assist; Hogsed added 2 points and 2 rebounds; Marevka added 2 points and 4 boards; Totherow pulled down 3 rebounds; Shirley dished out 2 assists.

Team stats: Union County shot 27% (15-56) from the floor, 91% (10-11) at the foul line and 25% (5-20) from downtown. Athens Academy hit 57% (31-54) from the floor, 53% (8-15) at the line and 39% (5-13) from deep.

Athens out-rebounded Union 35-29 and outscored the Panthers 50-20 in the paint. The Panthers committed 16 turnovers and forced 13.

Up next: Tuesday's girls' tip-off vs. Banks County is at 6 p.m. Friday's varsity action with East Jackson gets underway at 7 p.m. Saturday's girls' game at Providence will tip at 3 p.m. with the guys to follow.



Junior Hayden Hughes had 14 vs Fellowship and 13 at Banks County. Photo/Todd Forrest



Junior Jude Ellis scores 2 of his 16 points in the win over Fellowship Christian. Photo/Todd Forrest

Lady Panthers host Banks Co. in rematch for 8-AA's top spot

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A 10-point halftime deficit sank Union County (12-9, 5-1) on Tuesday, Jan. 23 in a 71-58 loss at No. 5 Banks County before the Lady Panthers picked up a pair of weekend wins at Athens Academy and vs. Fellowship Christian Academy.

The Lady Panthers host Banks County on Tuesday with an opportunity to draw even with the Leopards atop the region standings. Even with a second loss to Banks, Union County can secure the No. 2 seed in the Region 8-AA tournament as early as Friday with a Senior Night win over last-place East Jackson combined with a Providence loss Tuesday at Athens Academy.

Lady Panthers 47, Athens Academy 42 - Junior Katelyn Brown's go-ahead 3-point play put Union County ahead for good with 41 seconds remaining during a nailbiter in Athens on Friday.

Brown's basket came on the heels of two Spartans free throws that moved Athens back on top 42-41 with 57 seconds left. Posted down low, Brown's first attempt was too strong, but she came down with her miss and went back up for 2 points and the foul.

The free throw moved Union County ahead 44-42, but the two teams traded turnovers, giving possession back to Athens with 22 seconds left. But senior Lara Turner came up with her second-straight steal and Ariel McCarter bumped the lead to 45-42 by splitting two free throws with 12 seconds remaining.

The Spartans' attempt to force overtime ended with a third turnover in as many possessions, and Paula Robertson sealed the win with two from the line.



Katelyn Brown's late-game heroics helped Union County avoid the upset at Athens Academy. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Lady Panthers overcame a 26-13 halftime deficit after trailing 12-8 after one quarter. But Union stormed back via an 18-8 third frame to trail 34-31 heading to the fourth, where the visitors scored two quick buckets for a 35-34 edge.

Athens fired back with a 5-0 spurt to regain a 39-35 advantage with 4:35 to play. The score held until the 3:23 mark when Robertson moved Union within two with her coast-to-coast layup off a missed free throw.

The Spartans hit 1-of-2 at the line with 2:44 remaining, but seconds later, Robertson was fouled on her putback attempt and knocked down both tries, trimming the margin to 40-39.

On the ensuing Athens

Academy possession, McCarter dropped in a go-ahead layup after the junior guard picked off a pass near midcourt near the 2:15 mark.

After Hope Taylor pulled down a Spartans' miss, the Lady Panthers turned it over with 1:16 to play and Union was tagged with a foul 19 seconds later, resulting in a pair of go-ahead free throws.

McCarter scored 11 of her team-high 13 points during the second half to go with 8 rebounds, 5 steals and 3 assists. Robertson finished with 12 points and 6 boards despite dealing with foul trouble.

Brown had 11 points, 10 rebounds (8 offensive), 3 steals and 2 assists. Turner ended her night with 6 points, 6 boards, 4 steals and 2 blocks. Taylor finished with 2 points



Sophomore Paula Robertson had 12 points at Athens, including two late free throws that put away the Spartans. Photo/Todd Forrest

and 5 rebounds; Aubrie Akins had 2 points; Senior Kamryn Mull had 1 point, 3 steals and 2 boards.

Sloane Dyer pulled down 4 rebounds; Hensley Adams and Morgan Warren added one board each.

Lady Panthers 56, Fellowship Christian 22 - Union County overcame another sluggish first half to outscore the Paladins 38-7 after the break.

Fellowship held an 8-7 edge after a sloppy first quarter before Union County inched ahead 19-16 entering halftime.

A free throw by McCarter and Turner's and-1 sparked the third-quarter surge. Robertson answered a Fellowship bucket with a left-handed dribble drive, and Turner's backdoor feed to McCarter extended the advantage to 27-18.

Another McCarter free throw with 4:55 left in the period grew the lead to 28-18 right before Turner's steal-and-score provided a 12-point cushion.

Turner answered a Paladins basket by scoring in the paint on consecutive possessions, then Turner's steal resulted in a Mull trey and a 37-20 score.

Union County blew things open when layups from Robertson and Brown, building a 41-20 margin with 2:09 left in the third.

Brown added a bucket with 20 seconds on the clock, bringing the quarter to a close at 43-20, ahead of the Lady Panthers 11-2 fourth frame.

Brown finished with a 10-point, 11-rebound double-double to go with 3 steals and an assist.

McCarter had 10 points, 4 assists and one steal. Turner went for 9 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists and 3 steals. Robertson finished with 8 points and 4 boards; Mull had 6 points and an assist; Warren added 5 points and 4 rebounds.

Taylor had 4 points, 4 rebounds and 2 steals; Akins scored 2 points and pulled down 7 boards; Dyer and Adams each finished with 1 point and 3 rebounds.

Lady Panthers 58, No. 5 Banks County 71 - In a contest of 8-AA's last two unbeaten teams in region play, Banks County kept Union at arm's length during the second half after building a 31-21 lead at the intermission.

In a 20-15 game during the second, Banks County opened up a 15-point margin with a 10-0 run before Union narrowed the gap to 10 entering the third.

The Lady Panthers crept within single digits at 33-24, but Banks opened up advantages of 46-32 and 53-41 by quarter's end. Union narrowed the gap to 56-48 during the fourth until a 7-0 Leopards' spurt put the visitors away.

McCarter scored a game-high 23 points with 4 rebounds, 2 assists and 2 steals. Robertson had 15 points and 4 rebounds; Turner added 12 points and 5 boards.

Brown had 3 points, 8 rebounds, 5 assists, 2 steals and 2 blocks. Warren added 3 points and 3 rebounds; Taylor finished with 2 points and one rebound; Mull had 2 assists and 2 steals; Dyer chipped in two rebounds.

Up next: Union County and Banks County will likely settle the No. 1 seed in 8-AA when they tip off at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 30.

The Lady Panthers host last-place East Jackson at 7 p.m. Friday for Senior Night before visiting third-place Providence at 3 p.m. Saturday.

UCMS 7th grade girls cap perfect season with league title



The 7th grade celebrates their league championship on Wednesday, Jan. 24. Photo/Todd Forrest



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Union County's 7th grade girls faced a rare halftime deficit in last week's league championship game before pouring it on in the second half of a 62-49 win over White County.

Miya Totherow led the way with 26 points; Scout Henry had 9 points; Bristol Davis and Hailey Marshall had 8 points each.

Union County trailed 15-11 after one and 29-23 in the second before closing the half with 5-straight to move within a point.

But the third quarter was a different story as the Lady Panthers outscored White County 18-1 to mount a 46-30 advantage.

Union grew its lead to 58-37 with 2:54 remaining before putting it in cruise control the rest of the way.

Lennon Ellis added 6 points in the win and Kamryn Brown had five.



Miya Totherow led all scorers with 26 points. Photo/Todd Forrest

Other team members include Clara Davis, Mya Jordan and Elle Munn.

The girls are coached by Kayla Hemphill, Brittany Jordan and Megan Rowe.

Wrestling first at Sweet Onion Classic; Traditional Area up next



Union County wins the Sweet Onion Invitational at Toombs County. Photo/Jaime Legatt



Asa Smith-Foot took home gold over the weekend in Toombs County. Photo/Jaime Legatt

Lyons - Union County took down 21 teams over the weekend at Toombs County's Sweet Onion Classic.

Six different Panthers reached the finals with freshman Eli Flowers and junior Asa Smith-Foot taking first place.

Seniors Anderson Clouse, David Heredia, junior Payton Legatt and freshman Asa Smith-Foot each finished second.

The Panthers will head to Fannin County Saturday at 10 a.m. for the Traditional Area Tournament.

Next weekend, individual qualifiers from the Area tourney travel to Rockmart for the Class AA State Sectionals on Feb. 10.

The State Championships are Feb. 15-17 at the Macon Centerplex



Sophomore Kristyn Kraft, with coach Murphy McConnell, won gold in girls competition at Toombs County. Photo/Michael Smith-Foot