

# Sports

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## Union passes final test of preseason; host Gilmer on Friday

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The Panthers were clicking on all cylinders as they hosted Rabun Gap in their final tune-up game prior to this week's season opener vs Gilmer County.

Junior quarterback Cole Wright connected on 7-of-11 passes for 181 yards and 3 scores while rushing five times for 67 yards and a pair of touchdowns in one half of action vs Rabun Gap.

"Our execution was just better on both sides of the ball," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said. "Our blocking and pass (protection) was better and Cole Wright did a nice job escaping trouble."

The Eagles, who play in a North Carolina conference are two years removed from reaching the State Championship in North Carolina's Private School classification.

But they were unable to gain any traction, on either side of the ball, at Union County last Thursday evening.

No score was kept but the Panthers managed to find the endzone five times in the first half while Rabun Gap only mustered three first downs over the same time span.

"I think our tackling was a little better than what it was against White County," Coach Allison said. "If we can continue to improve (our tackling) I think we'll be fine."

Both teams exchanged touchdowns in the third before the junior varsity players took over in the fourth quarter.

Freshman quarterback Pierson Allison orchestrated two 70-yard scoring drives in the final frame while the Eagles offense continued to stall out.

Senior wide receiver Slade Thompson hauled in three grabs for 93 yards with 63 yards coming on a touchdown reception on the Panthers' opening series of the game.

Following Rabun Gap's second punt of the game, Wright picked apart the Eagles defense on the ensuing series, completing 3-of-5 passes for 58 yards and a score.

After moving the chains with an 11-yard scramble, Wright hit junior Austin Pattee for 20, then he connected with junior receiver Eric Strayer for 13 more.



Quarterback Cole Wright goes airborne for one of the junior's five total touchdowns during the first half. Wright gave way to Hemphill and Allison following halftime. Photo/Todd Forrest



Slade Thompson looks for additional yards following a pass completion from Wright. Photo/Todd Forrest

Senior running back Bo Lynch carried for 15 yards and junior Logan Dyer reeled in a 25-yard scoring strike from Wright for the Panthers second score of the game.

An interception by junior Micah Gilbert was returned 25 yards but Union County eventually punted, but the defense forced a three-and-out and the Eagles' mishandled a punt snap — setting up the Panthers with a 1st-and-goal at the nine.

On the next play, Wright weaved his way through traffic for a 9-yard score.

A turnover-on-downs was the result of Rabun Gap's next offensive series and Wright took advantage once more.

A 29-yard carry by Lynch set up a 25-yard scoring run

from Wright with 5:11 to play in the half.

The offense got one last shot before halftime when the defense forced a punt and Union took over on their own 38 with 2:53 before the break.

Facing a 1st-and-20, Wright went back to Dyer for 27 yards, then two plays later he hit junior running back Cole Dockrey on a swing pass out of the backfield that resulted in some serious "yards-after-catch" as Dockrey took it to the house from 35-yards out.

Sophomore quarterback Kanon Hemphill entered in the third quarter and a sack derailed the Panthers opening series of the second half. And to make matters worse, on 4th-and-10 the punt snap sailed high and



Sporting brand new uniforms on Friday, the Panthers' defensive front resembled the Minnesota Vikings' legendary "Purple People Eaters" defense in both attire and physicality. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Dawson Groves with his helmet held high as Union prepares to kickoff to open the game. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Eagles set up shop at the Union 26.

Three plays later, Rabun Gap used a 14-yard touchdown pass for its first, and only, score of the game.

The Panthers responded later in the quarter with a score when Hunter Kelley picked off a pass and returned it into Eagles' territory. Senior Nic Rodriguez carried for 25 yards and 4 yards, Hemphill added 8 yards with his legs, and Rodriguez capped off the drive by powering his way into the endzone from the 3-yard line.

Allison took the helm of the offense in the fourth quarter and completed 5-of-9 for 67 yards and a score while rushing twice for 31 yards.

Jacob Spratlin was Al-

lison's favorite target during the first scoring drive - catching 3 passes for 40 yards, including a 10-yard touchdown grab on fourth down.

Rabun Gap received a steady dose of sophomore running back Chad Buzzard during the second scoring drive as he finished with 68 yards and a score on 8 carries.

On Friday the Panthers host Gilmer County from Class AAAA, who are coming off a narrow 17-14 defeat at the hands of arch-rival Fannin County.

"I expect an extremely physical ball game," Coach Allison said. "They're big, physical, and run the ball right at you so we're going to have to prepare ourselves mentally."

The following stats are unofficial.

**Team stats:** Union County: 481 yards of total offense. RUSHING: 29 carries, 233 yards, PASSING: 12-of-21, 248 yards.

Rabun Gap: 161 yards of total offense, RUSHING: 35 carries for 58 yards, PASSING: 10 completions for 103 yards.

**Individual stats:** Cole Wright: 7-for-11, 181 yards, 3 TD. Five carries for 67 yards and 2 TD. Slade Thompson: 3 receptions for 93 yards, 1 TD.

Bo Lynch: 5 carries for 51 yards. Cole Dockrey: 3 carries for 7 yards, 1 catch for 35 yards and a score.

Logan Dyer: 2 receptions for 52 yards and a score. Nic Rodriguez: 3 carries for 32 yards and a score.

Chad Buzzard: 8 carries for 68 yards and a score. Pierson Allison: 5-for-9, 67 yards and 1 TD. Two carries for 31 yards.

Eric Strayer: 1 catch for 13 yards, 1 carry for 15 yards. Jacob Spratlin: 3 receptions for 40 yards and a score.

Austin Pattee: 1 catch for 20 yards. Kyle Morlock: 1 catch for 15 yards.

Jerick Young: 1 catch for 12 yards. Kanon Hemphill: 0-for-1 passing, 1 carry for 3 yards.

**Scoring summary:**

**1ST QUARTER**

UC - 4 plays, 88 yards in 57 seconds. Slade Thompson 63-yard touchdown pass from Wright.

UC - 9 plays, 90 yards in 2:03. Logan Dyer 25-yard touchdown pass from Wright.

**2ND QUARTER**

UC - 1 play, 9 yards in 6 seconds. Cole Wright 9-yard touchdown run.

UC - 2 plays, 54 yards in 34 seconds. Cole Wright 25-yard touchdown run

UC - 5 plays, 62 yards in 1:31. Cole Dockrey 35-yard touchdown pass from Wright.

**3RD QUARTER**

RG - 3 plays, 26 yards in 41 seconds. 14-yard touchdown pass.

UC - 4 plays, 39 yards in 1:14. Rodriguez 3-yard touchdown run

**4TH QUARTER**

UC - 9 plays, 70 yards in 2:47. Spratlin 11-yards touchdown pass from Allison

UC - 9 plays 70 yards in 3:00. Buzzard 3-yard touchdown run.

## Chambers returns to circle with shutout victory; bats struggle at East Hall

Lady Panthers fall to Monticello and Apalachee over the weekend at YHC

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The Union County Lady Panthers finally caught a break last week when four-year ace Laken Chambers returned to the circle for the first time since suffering an injury last October vs Gordon Lee in the Class AA Elite 8 in Columbus.

As a result, Union County finally reached the win column with a 1-0 victory over Dawson County on Tuesday.

Chambers fanned 13 batters while limiting the Lady Tigers to just two hits.

The game remained scoreless until the fourth inning when Chambers lined a one-out double off the right field fence.

With sophomore Maddie Sutton entering as a courtesy runner, junior Jillian Lawn singled up the middle to bring Sutton home.

Dawson County refused to go away quietly as they quickly put two aboard in the top half of the fifth.

A passed ball allowed both to move up into scoring position but Chambers would slam the door shut with three straight strikeouts.

Poteete reached with a two-out single in the fifth but was thrown out on the base paths.

The junior shortstop would finish with a 2-for-2 day, while Chambers and Lawn accounted for Union's other two hits.

Chambers didn't walk a batter during a performance that prevented an 0-4 start in Region 7-AAA and 0-6 overall.



Laken Chambers fired a complete game shutout in her season debut vs Dawson County last Tuesday. Her double at the plate also led to Union's only run of the game. Photo/Todd Forrest

ment was short-lived as the Lady Panthers were unable to even their record at 2-2 when they fell 4-3 at East Hall on Thursday to drop to 1-3 in Region 7-AAA

Over the weekend, Union slipped to 1-5 overall with a 2-1 loss to Monticello, and an 8-7 loss to Apalachee at Young Harris College.

Against Monticello, Chambers and junior Jillian Lawn combined for 9 strikeouts while allowing one run each from the circle but the offense could only muster 6 hits and one run.

Chambers' RBI double

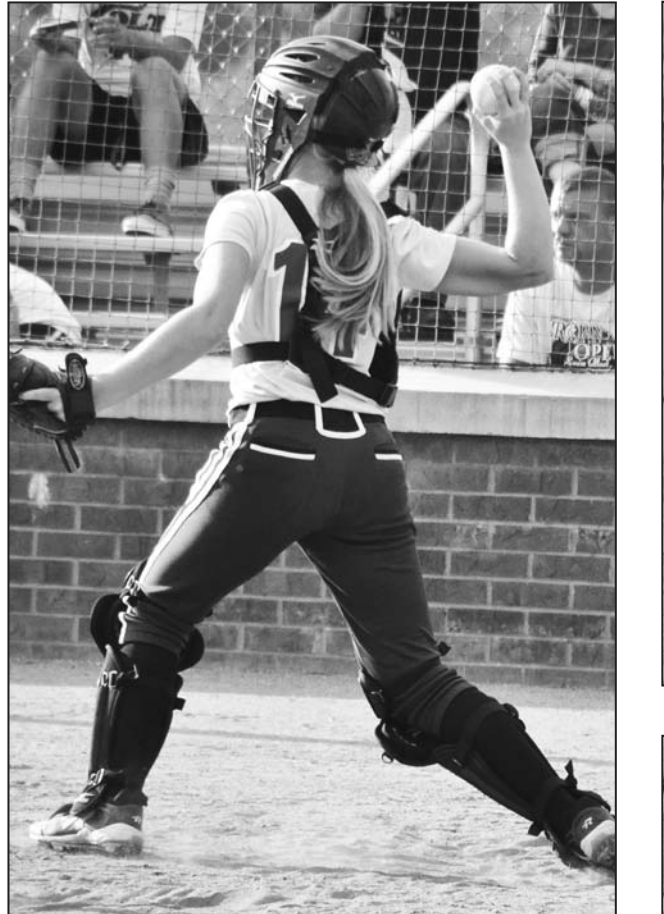
in the first inning accounted for Union's only run, while sophomore Aladriel Arnold finished 2-for-3.

In the loss to Apalachee, the bats produced 7 runs but the Lady Panthers were unable to fend off a seventh inning rally.

During the trip to East Hall, Union County fell into a 4-0 hole and were unable to claw their way out.

They were able to post 2 runs in the fifth before getting one in the seventh, but it was too little, too late.

Up next, Union will host White County on



Freshman catcher Mary Wischmeyer fires down to first base to keep a Lady Tigers baserunner close. Photo/Todd Forrest

Wednesday in another non-region contest, as they have one more game to right-the-ship before jumping back into region play.

A rivalry awaits on Thursday as the Lady Panthers visit Fannin County for a 5 p.m. showdown with the Lady Rebels.

This coming weekend, Union County will play two at Habersham County beginning at 11:30 a.m. when they take on Class AAAA's Chestatee.

At 1 p.m. the Lady Panthers will meet the host team Hanersham Central

from Class AAAAAA.

The junior varsity will also be in action this week as they play White County at 4:30 p.m., prior to the varsity contest at 6 p.m. on Wednesday

Chambers has a chance to move into the record books this week as she is just 3 RBIs away from becoming Union County's all-time RBI leader.

Chambers entered the season just 8 RBIs behind Callie Dyer and with 6 on the season, the record could fall this week.

She is also one double



Braden Poteete



Maddie Sutton scores the game-winning run vs Dawson County

away from becoming just the fifth Lady Panther to record at least 30 two-baggers in their career.