

# Sports

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## Panthers rout Social Circle to set up region title game at Rabun

**Coach Allison: If you can't get fired up for this game, you can't get fired up for anything**

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The stage is set for Friday night's Region 8-AA title game as unbeaten Union County travels to 3rd ranked Rabun County (8-1, 6-0).

Last week, the Panthers (9-0, 6-0) jumped out to a 35-0 halftime advantage over Social Circle (4-5, 1-5) before coasting to a 42-7 Senior Night victory. Meanwhile, Rabun dismantled winless Oglethorpe County 63-6, dropping 60-plus on its second straight opponent.

Pierson Allison torched the Redskins defense to the tune of 341 passing yards on just 9-of-11 attempts while accounting for all five first half touchdowns. The junior quarterback completed his first nine throws of the night before handing the keys to the backups after one series in the third quarter.

During the first two quarters, Pierson Allison connected on career-long touchdown passes to three different receivers: Kyle Morlock (77 yards), Sawyer Drake (74 yards) and Cayden Rich (52 yards).

On the other side of the ball, the Panther defense limited Social Circle's rushing attack to just 90 yards on 34 carries (2.65 yards per carry). Entering the contest, the Redskins were averaging 6.5 YPC and 212 yards a night on the ground.

After the win, senior linebacker Hunter Kelley talked about what it was like to take the field following an emotional Senior Night ceremony held prior to kickoff.

"It was a little heart-breaking but we were ready to get out there and take care of business," he said. "We came out with a bit of an edge and were playing with our hair on fire during the first half and into the third quarter."

Union's D set the tone early with a three-and-out on the first series of the game, forcing a short punt that was fielded by Kanon Hemphill and returned to the Redskins 29-yard line. From there, Pierson Allison connected with Morlock and Hemphill for 8 and 11 yards, respectively, setting up 1st-and-goal from the 10. From there, consecutive 5-yard quarterback keepers would put Union on top 7-0 less than three minutes into the game.

A late hit extended the ensuing Social Circle drive but they eventually punted and the Panthers took over at their own 23.

"I was a little concerned about how we were going to come out but our kids were fired up and excited," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said. "The defense played strong and the one drive (Social Circle) had was on us. We gave them two first downs on penalties and another time we lost our minds on our option responsibility and let the quarterback get wide."

With a first down at the 23-yard line, Morlock took a tunnel screen and followed the downfield blocking from his fellow receivers before cutting outside and breaking free down the far sideline for a 77-yard score -- Union's longest play from scrimmage this season and the team's longest passing play since Joe Mancuso and Sam Gilbert torched these same Redskins on a 90-yard comple-



Left: Pierson Allison (17) celebrates with his offensive line following the first of five touchdowns on the night for the junior quarterback. Senior safety Chayton Schafer (2) drags down a Social Circle running back during the first half of Union County's 42-7 victory. Photos/Todd Forrest



tion at Social Circle in 2015.

Leading 14-0, the Panther offense set up shop at its own 17 following the Redskins' third punt in as many possessions. On 2nd-and-2 from the 26, Pierson Allison went up top to Drake and the junior receiver ran under the pass at the Social Circle 40 and darted untouched into the end zone for 21-0 lead following the Brian Smith kick.

The 74-yard hook-up was the longest of Drake's career, topping his previous long of 71 coming last season vs Andrews, NC.

The Redskins would respond with a 14-play drive that stalled at the Union County 13 after they were unable to convert their second fourth down attempt of the drive.

With the offense's worst starting field position of the night, a give to Buzzard went for 13 yards, moving the ball across the 25. An offside penalty and a 28-yard completion to Chayton Schafer had the Panthers in Social Circle territory after two plays. A 5-yard carry by Buzzard was followed by a 36-yard dart over the middle from Pierson Allison to Hemphill that turned into a TD after to a broken tackle at the 20 and a stiff arm inside the five.

According to Coach Allison, the bright spot on the offense was its line play. Following an up-and-down evening at Oglethorpe County, he was pleased with his offensive line's performance one week later.

"I think (our offensive line) was much more consistent vs Social Circle," he said. "We blocked better, we stayed on our blocks better and it was probably the best game we've played on the offensive line."

On top 28-0, Union County received one last crack at the end zone prior to halftime when the Redskins sailed a 46-yard field goal wide left at the 1:25 mark. Looking at 1st-and-15 from the 15 -- thanks to an ineligible receiver penalty -- Hemphill hauled in another lengthy reception, this time for 33 yards. Just shy of midfield with under a minute on the clock, Social Circle brought the house on a blitz but a quick slant route went for 52 yards and a score when Rich split a pair of defenders at the 40, leaving him with clear sailing to the end zone.

"It's nice when you have guys that can catch it and run with it," Coach Allison said. "Those big plays was what we were looking for. Social was

putting seven in the box and playing (man-to-man defense) on us. They forced us to do that once before when Joe (Mancuso) was a senior and we had a hard time at first but we finally hit a couple long passes to Sam Gilbert."

The third quarter opened with a running clock and the Union offensive starters on the field for one last series. An incompletion on third down resulted in the Panthers' first punt of the night, which bounced out-of-bounds at the 23. Another quick three-and-out by the Union defense resulted in a botched snap, allowing the Panthers to take over inside the red zone when the punter was tackled at the 14.

Freshman Logan Helcher replaced Pierson Allison and on the first play, sophomore Jonah Daniel rushed for 12 yards, bringing up 1st-and-goal at the two. Two incompletions and a short Daniel run followed, resulting in fourth down from the one. This time, Zion Ross came in motion from the receiver position, taking a shovel pass from Helcher and outrunning the defense to the pylon for his first varsity touchdown.

With 12 seconds remaining in the third, Mason McCombs' point-after gave Union County a 42-0 lead that would hold up until the 5:33 mark of the fourth when a 79-yard interception return put the Redskins on the board. Despite the pick-six, the Panther defense extended its streak to nine quarters without allowing a touchdown.

Late in the game, senior linebacker Kyle Williams was inserted at running back and picked up 27 yards on the first-and-only carry of his career. After the game, Williams talked about his backfield debut. And surprisingly, it didn't take much persuasion on Williams' part to get his number called.

"He (Coach Allison) pulled me over to the side and said 'I'm going to put you in on offense,'" Williams said. "(After getting the handoff) I saw two guys coming at me so I just started outside and took off."

**Up next:** Union travels to No. 3 Rabun County on Friday with the 8-AA title and a No. 1 seed in the state tournament on the line.

"We have to tackle (at Rabun County) and be ready to play physical," Kelley said. "They have a very physical offensive line, especially their center, and we have to be ready for that."

According to Coach Allison, the game should be decided by the big guys in the trenches, as was the case when Union last traveled to Rabun County in 2015.

"The last time we played them they really got after (quarterback Joe Mancuso) and he wound up getting hurt," he said. "It's going to be a challenge again. They're obviously the best football team we've played this year. They're very physical on both sides of the ball, the most physical team we've seen, but these types of games are why you play. This is why you practice and put in all the offseason work. This is why you do all of the things that you do, to put yourself in these types of games."

"We're going to lay it all out there. When we walk off the field, if we win, we win, and if we lose, we lose, but we're going to lay it all on the line."

"We just need to stay healthy and play all out," Williams added. "Win or lose, we're going to give it all we have."

The two schools have met 51 previous times despite a recent two-year hiatus. Overall, Rabun County owns the series with a 35-16 record. The Wildcats have won four straight in the series with Union's last win coming in Tiger in 2011.

Despite not playing since 2015, these two teams are familiar with each other and at this point in the season, there isn't much the opponent hasn't seen on film.

"I'm sure they have all nine of our games (on film) and we have several of their games," Coach Allison said. "Now it just comes down to putting our players in the right position and whoever makes the most plays is going to win the ball game."

On the road, Union County is 10-16 vs the Wildcats but have never defeated a ranked Rabun County squad, sporting an 0-5 all-time mark vs Wildcat teams in the top 10.

The last meeting vs a ranked Rabun team was a 49-3 road loss in 2015. In 1977, Union fell 3-0 in Tiger; in 1970 the 10th ranked Wildcats demolished the Panthers 64-6 in Blairsville; in 1964 they defeated Union 27-6; the first meeting in the series came in 1958 when No. 6 Rabun shut-out the Panthers 19-0.

Not only are the Panthers looking to turn things around vs Rabun, they're hoping to

See *Region Championship*, Page 3B

Union County vs Rabun County series history			
Date	Location	Opponent	Result
2015-10-16	A	Rabun County	L 3 - 49
2014-10-17	H	Rabun County	L 31 - 45
2013-10-25	H	Rabun County	L 18 - 42
2012-10-26	A	Rabun County	L 10 - 38
2011-10-21	A	Rabun County	W 10 - 7
2010-10-22	H	Rabun County	W 38 - 14
2009-09-04	H	Rabun County	W 27 - 13
2008-09-05	A	Rabun County	W 20 - 14
2007-10-26	A	Rabun County	W 35 - 14
2006-10-27	H	Rabun County	L 0 - 41
2005-10-14	A	Rabun County	W 21 - 14
2004-10-15	H	Rabun County	L 0 - 30
2003-11-07	H	Rabun County	L 13 - 34
2002-11-08	A	Rabun County	L 20 - 21
2001-10-12	H	Rabun County	W 30 - 7
2000-10-13	A	Rabun County	W 23 - 13
1997-10-17	A	Rabun County	L 8 - 31
1996-10-18	H	Rabun County	L 6 - 27
1989-09-08	H	Rabun County	L 8 - 30
1988-09-09	A	Rabun County	L 14 - 22
1987-09-11	H	Rabun County	L 0 - 16
1986-09-12	A	Rabun County	W 24 - 17
1985-09-13	H	Rabun County	W 27 - 7
1984-09-14	A	Rabun County	L 3 - 10
1983-10-21	H	Rabun County	W 14 - 12
1982-10-22	A	Rabun County	L 0 - 47
1981-10-23	H	Rabun County	L 0 - 41
1980-10-24	A	Rabun County	L 0 - 20
1979-10-26	A	Rabun County	W 27 - 7
1978-09-08	A	Rabun County	L 6 - 24
1978-10-27	H	Rabun County	L 7 - 14
1977-10-14	A	Rabun County	L 0 - 3
1976-10-15	H	Rabun County	L 12 - 21
1975-10-17	A	Rabun County	L 12 - 19
1974-10-18	H	Rabun County	W 40 - 6
1973-10-19	A	Rabun County	W 42 - 21
1972-10-20	H	Rabun County	L 8 - 12
1971-10-22	A	Rabun County	W 28 - 16
1970-10-23	H	Rabun County	L 6 - 64
1969-10-24	A	Rabun County	L 0 - 30
1968-10-25	H	Rabun County	L 20 - 21
1967-09-08	A	Rabun County	W 25 - 13
1966-09-09	H	Rabun County	L 6 - 19
1965-09-10	A	Rabun County	L 0 - 38
1964-09-11	H	Rabun County	L 6 - 27
1963-10-25	A	Rabun County	L 0 - 28
1962-10-19	H	Rabun County	L 13 - 27
1961-09-22	A	Rabun County	L 0 - 40
1960-09-23	H	Rabun County	L 0 - 28
1959-09-25	A	Rabun County	L 0 - 26
1958-09-26	H	Rabun County	L 0 - 19

Scoring Summary			
Quarter	Player	Yards	Score
First Quarter			UCHS SCHS
	TD Pierson Allison 4 Yd Run (Brian Smith Kick)		7 0
	TD Kyle Morlock 77 Yd Pass From Pierson Allison (Brian Smith Kick)		14 0
	TD Sawyer Drake 74 Yd Pass From Pierson Allison (Brian Smith Kick)		21 0
Second Quarter			UCHS SCHS
	TD Kanon Hemphill 36 Yd Pass From Pierson Allison (Brian Smith Kick)		28 0
	TD Cayden Rich 52 Yd Pass From Pierson Allison (Brian Smith Kick)		35 0
Third Quarter			UCHS SCHS
	TD Zion Ross 2 Yd Pass From Logan Helcher (Kick)		42 0
Fourth Quarter			UCHS SCHS
	TD 79 Yd Interception Return (Kick)		42 7