

Sports

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Stout Bremen defense holds Panthers to season low in points, yards

Blue Devils rush for 388 yards while limiting Union to 128 though the air during 40-10 victory

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@ngame.com

Union County's season came to a close Friday night following a 40-10 loss to the third-seeded Bremen Blue Devils, who overwhelmed the Panthers with a physical ground game and an attacking defense.

"They were just the better football team on Friday night," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said.

After holding Region 8-AA Champion Rabun County to just 10 points in the season opener, Union County (9-2) knew it would have its hands full with a squad that's quite possibly the best No. 3 seed in the state.

The Blue Devils (9-2) jumped out to a 21-0 advantage before a Chayton Schafer blocked punt set up Union's only points of the first half -- a 26-yard field goal from Brian Smith, late in the second quarter.

Bremen extended its 21-3 halftime advantage to 33-3 at the end of the third before the Panthers finally reached the end zone on a 28-yard touchdown pass from Pierson Allison to Kyle Morlock -- trimming the Blue Devil margin to 33-10.

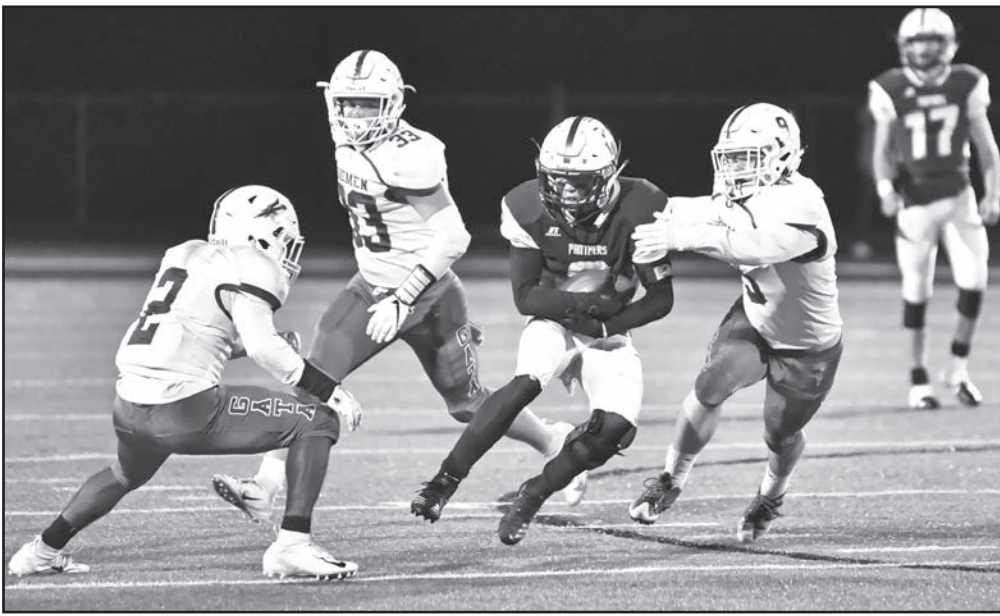
Bremen added a late touchdown to extend the final score to 40-10, capping off a dominating rushing performance. Senior quarterback Wade Cartwright rushed for four touchdowns while senior running back Tyran Dobbs led a ground attack that churned out 388 yards on 6.7 yards-per-carry.

Meanwhile, the Panther offense was unable to find a rhythm as the Blue Devil defense limited Union to a season-low 233 total yards and 2-for-13 on third down conversions.

"We were unable to run the football and their corners were able to lock us down," Coach Allison said. "They had two really good corners and they came up and pressed us. We knew coming in they were good at corner and we'd have to complete some throws downfield if we wanted to move the ball against them."

Bremen's offense set the tone early on the game's opening series, driving 80 yards on 11 plays while chewing more than 5 minutes off the clock.

The Panthers' opening possession ended following one



L-R: Senior receiver/defensive back Chayton Schafer fights for extra yardage on a third down screen pass during the first half vs Bremen. Senior placekicker Brian Smith puts Union County on the board with a 26-yard field goal during the latter stages of the first half. Photos/Todd Forrest

first down on a Pierson Allison scramble. Both teams would exchange punts and Union County got the ball back with 3:02 left in the opening quarter, still trailing 7-0.

Starting from its own 34, Union moved the chains with another Pierson Allison keeper. Later, facing 3rd-and-8 from near midfield, Schafer took a screen pass 7 yards, bringing up 4th-and-1 at the Blue Devil 46-yard line.

The second quarter got underway with the Panthers electing to punt from the Bremen side of the 50, but a 16-yard kick allowed the Blue Devils to take over at the 30.

The ensuing Bremen drive went 70 yards on nine plays, ending with a 1-yard touchdown run by Cartwright, putting Union in a 14-0 hole.

A holding flag pushed the Panthers back to the 13 where the offense suffered a three-and-out when a 3rd-and-8 pass fell incomplete.

Starting from the Union 48-yard line following another punt, the Blue Devils needed just eight plays to extend their lead to 21-0 on a 4-yard quarterback keeper.

A false start turned a Panther 3rd-and-3 into 3rd-and-8 and Pierson Allison's 5-yard scamper wasn't enough to move the sticks. Union County would catch a break, however, when Bremen fumbled the punt return and breathed new life into the Panther offense near midfield.

A first down completion to Sawyer Drake was good for 13 yards but that's all the momentum Union could muster as a dropped pass negated a 34-yard touchdown strike and the Panthers were eventually

dropped for a loss on a fourth down try.

"We had some chances to score but we made some bad throws and had a couple of drops that could have kept it a little closer," Coach Allison said. "(Bremen was) able to take away our screen (pass) game and we didn't make them pay with the deep ball like we have most of the year. Even against Rabun we were able to hit a couple deep balls. You just have to tip your hat to (Bremen)."

The Union defense awarded the offense one more opportunity to get on the board before the break as they forced a Bremen punt that was blocked by Schafer with 1:30 left in the half.

Starting from the 27, Schafer drew a pass interference penalty that gave Union County a first down at the 12. But a 3-yard run by Chad Buzard was as close as they'd get as consecutive incomplete passes -- including another drop -- brought Smith on for a 26-yard field goal.

With time winding down in the half, Bremen had a shot to tack-on 3 points but missed wide right from 41 yards as time expired.

The third quarter opened with a 10-yard completion to Morlock but a sack and a penalty forced another Union punt. The Blue Devil offense stalled inside the 30 where they were unsuccessful on a 46-yard field goal attempt, keeping Union in the game at 21-3 at the 8:42 mark of the third.

On the ensuing drive, Bremen picked off a Pierson Allison pass on 3rd-and-10, returning it to the Union 30. Five plays, and a missed extra point

later, the Blue Devils were starting to pull away at 27-3.

A third down sack forced another Panther punt as Bremen put the game away with an 8-play, 53-yard scoring drive to open up a 33-3 advantage with 1:03 left in the third.

Bremen appeared to add a defensive score when they scooped up a Union fumble and took it the other way for a score but the pass was ruled incomplete instead of a fumble. With another shot, Morlock hauled in consecutive receptions of 14 and 20 yards -- the second grab cutting the Blue Devil lead to 33-10 with the Smith kick.

With 9:33 to play and a running clock, there was little hope for a Panther comeback but Bremen put those dreams to rest with a 7-play, 80-yard scoring drive that ended with a 26-yard run.

The final Union County drive of the season stalled out deep in Blue Devil territory



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when they were unable to convert a 4th-and-4 from the 10.

As the offseason gets underway, Coach Allison's focus will be on getting better in the trenches. With better line play on both sides, Union County will be better equipped to run the football and prevent the opposition from running the football -- his two main areas of concern.

"One thing we've known all year about our football team is that we need to be more physical," Coach Allison said. "Bremen and even Rabun were able to push us around a little bit. And it's no secret that Bremen was able to run it right at us. The running back (Tyran Dobbs) was a factor and we need to figure out how to do a better job of stopping the run."

"On offense we have to put a greater emphasis on running the football," he said. "We've got to get stronger and bigger up front and be able

to sustain blocks. We've just got to get better at running the football and running it between the tackles. If you can't run the ball, you're not going to be able to win (playoff) games."

Overall, Coach Allison was pleased with the season, especially the encouragement from the community, not only for his team but for his team's honorary captain Friday night.

"It was a blessing to see Lassiter (Windsor) out there with our captains for the coin toss," he said. "After watching the recovery process and seeing how far he's come, it was a blessing to see him there. Moments like that are what this is all about."

I also want to let everyone know how much I appreciate our community and our county for all of the support they've given our football team over the course of the season. It means a lot to me and all the players and coaches."



Lassiter Windsor (far right - 00) was an honorary team captain for Friday's playoff game. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Jackson Colwell (32) leads the Panthers onto the field for the final time following a record-setting 2018 season. Photo/Todd Forrest

Offense

Passing	Comp/Att	Yds	TD	Int	Long
Rest of team	15 / 33	128	1	1	28
Rushing	Att	Yds	TD	Long	Fum
Rest of team	23	105	-	24	-
Receiving	Rec	Yds	TD	Long	Fum
Rest of team	15	128	1	28	-

Team Totals

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Total Plays	59 65
Total Yards	233 449
Passing Yards	128 61
Rushing Yards	105 388
First Downs	13 27
Third Down Efficiency	2-13 (15%) 7-10 (70%)
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-1 (0%) 0-1 (0%)
Turnovers	1 1
Fumbles Lost	- 1
Interceptions Thrown	1 -
Penalties	3 -
Yards	20 -