

Sports

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Lady Panthers win two of three, suffer first loss at Fannin

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

The Union County Lady Panthers recorded a pair of home blowouts over Tallulah Falls and Towns County after moving into the 10th spot in last week's Class AA rankings, however, they would drop their first game of the season, 52-47 at Fannin County on Saturday, Dec. 7 to close out the week.

Sitting at 5-1 on the year, Union County will take Tuesday night off before entering Region 8-AA play with a pair of weekend showdowns with Elbert County and Monticello - both of whom played spoiler to the Lady Panthers' playoff hopes last season.

Union County plays host to Elbert County on Friday in the first meeting since the Blue Devils were victorious in a low-scoring upset victory in Blairsville last January. On Saturday, the Lady Panthers will hit the road to face Monticello, who ended Union's season in the first round of the region tournament in February.

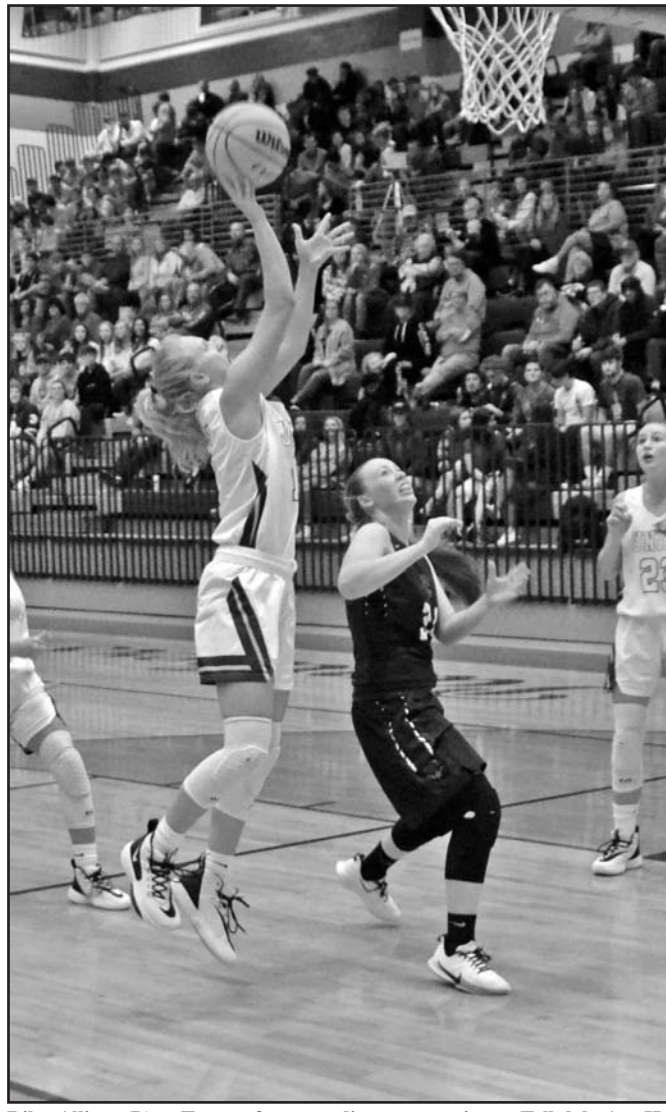
By the end of this week, Lady Panther fans could have a pretty clear picture of whether or not their team is ready to compete for a region title or if they're to remain a middle-of-the-pack squad in 8-AA.

Lady Panthers 52, Towns County 24 - Sophomore Ava Hunter matched the Lady Indians by herself with a game-high 24 points as Union County held Towns County without a field goal until the third quarter of its 28-point victory on Friday.

The Lady Panthers won their fifth straight behind a smothering defense that helped spark a 16-0 advantage after one quarter and 28-0 in the second before a Vanessa Floyd free throw put the Lady Indians on the board.

Seven second-quarter free throws from Floyd would account for all of the Towns offense in the first half as Union County held a comfortable 36-7 lead at the break.

Hunter did most of her damage in the first 16 minutes as she poured in 18 first half points. Freshman Ellie Cook



Riley Allison (L) vs Towns after recording seven assists vs Tallulah; Ava Hunter (R) scores two of her game-high 24 vs Towns. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

scored all of her six points in the first two quarters and junior Kyla Locklear scored four of her six in the first half. Seniors Brooke Dockrey, Andelin Hill, Kait McCarter and freshman Kaylee Helton rounded out the Union scoring in the first half with two points apiece.

The Lady Panthers stretched their lead to 49-12 after three as McCarter knocked down a trey, sophomore Rebekah Chambers hit two free throws, Locklear added a bucket and Hunter scored six to stretch the margin to 37.

Towns outscored Union 5-3 in the mercy-rule shortened fourth quarter as Chambers accounted for the only basket and freshman Corinne Hill split a pair at the charity stripe.

McCarter finished with 5 points, Chambers had four, Dockrey, Andelin Hill and Helton added two each while Corinne Hill scored one.

Union hit 7-of-8 from the line. Towns was 11-for-21.

Floyd led the Lady Indians with 11, Sarah Shook had six, Kennedy Henson added four and Sophia Shook finished with three.

Lady Panthers 67, Tallulah Falls 46 - Dockrey scored 15 points -- two shy of her career-high -- on 5-of-6 from the floor and 3-of-3 from downtown to lead the Lady Panthers to their fourth straight win.

The senior point guard scored 11 of her 15 points after halftime to help ignite her team's 39-point second-half outburst.

Hunter finished with 14 points, 11 rebounds, two steals and a block but struggled at times in Union's first game back from the Thanksgiving break. The sophomore post finished 5-of-16 from the floor, 4-of-10 from the line and committed six turnovers.

Senior Andelin Hill re-



turned to form after going scoreless in the win at White County. The senior forward finished with 10 points -- seven in the second half -- on 4-of-9 shooting and 2-for-3 from the stripe. She also pulled down seven boards to go with two assists, two blocks and a pair of steals.

McCarter finished three points shy of a double-double with 7 points and 10 boards. Sophomore Riley Allison dished out a career-high seven assists to go with 4 points and five boards.

Cook scored nine points and recorded a game-high five steals to go with two rebounds and a pair of dimes. Locklear finished with 4 points, four boards, two steals and a block; Chambers and Corinne Hill chipped in 2 points apiece with Chambers hauling in four rebounds.

Lady Panthers 47, Fannin County 52 - Union County failed to score 50 points for the first time this

season as the Lady Rebels held them to a season-low 47 points to drop the Lady Panthers to 5-1 overall.

Hunters scored 13 of her team-high 19 points in the first half -- nine coming in the first quarter -- as Fannin County clamped down on Union's leading scorer after halftime - limiting her to just one third-quarter field goal and 4-for-6 from the line in the fourth.

The Lady Panthers were limited by foul trouble in the first half as Cook was tagged with three fouls and Dockrey, McCarter and Andelin Hill picked up two each.

After getting blanked in the first half, Dockrey and McCarter combined to score 16 points after the break but it wasn't enough as the resurgent Lady Rebels improved to 4-1 on the year. McCarter hit 9-of-10 at the line while Dockrey scored all of her seven points in the third quarter.

Meanwhile, a fourth-quarter 3-pointer was all the offense Andelin Hill could muster in the second half as the senior finished with seven.

A second-quarter trey was Cook's only points of the night and Locklear hit two first-quarter free throws to finish with 2 points.

Up next - Region play opens Friday when Union County hosts 2-1 Elbert County. The Blue Devils came on strong at the end of last season, defeating Union in Blairsville then upsetting the 2-seed Banks County in the region tournament to finish second in 8-AA.

Following a region title game loss to Rabun County, Elbert knocked off Callaway in the opening round of State before losing at Rockmart, 63-55 in the second round. Despite peaking at the right moment last season, Elbert must replace six of its top-seven players. They are still led by returning point guard Maggie Campbell and already owns wins over rival Hart County (54-46) and a struggling Crawford County (66-15). Their lone defeat was a 63-46 loss to Madison County, who finished 25-3 last year en route to winning the Region 8-AAAA championship.

Union County will travel to Monticello on Saturday looking for revenge on the squad that eliminated them from last year's Region 8-AA tournament. The Canes are currently 1-4 with its win a 42-35 victory over winless Greene County. Their four losses have come by an average margin of 36.5 points, albeit against pretty solid competition who sport a combined record of 17-9.

Last year, Monticello finished with a 15-14 record and lost a 63-62 nailbiter at Region 5-AA Champion Lamar County in the opening round of State. The Canes, in a similar situation to Elbert, graduated four of their top-five scorers off a team that defeated Union County three times last season. However, two of those wins came by 3 points or fewer, including their 61-58 region tournament victory.

Panthers pull away from Tallulah and Towns, fall short at Fannin County

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Union County picked up a pair of 20-point home victories over Tallulah Falls and Towns County before a narrow loss at Fannin County on Saturday, Dec. 7 closed out the week.

The Panthers will take Tuesday night off before beginning region play on Friday with the defending Region 8-AA Champion Elbert County at home. The following day, Union County will visit Monticello as the grueling region road slate gets underway.

Panthers 69, Towns County 49 - Trailing 23-22 at the break, Union County outscored Towns County 47-26 in the second half, and 20-4 down the stretch, to pick up its second-straight win as four different Panthers finished with double-digit point totals.

Holding a 43-39 advantage after three, Union County clamped down on the Indians over the final eight minutes, forcing Towns into 4-of-19 (26 percent) shooting from the floor. Senior Pierson Allison scored a team-high 21 points, going 5-for-5 at the line and hitting 2-of-3 from long distance during the fourth quarter (2-for-6 overall) as the Panthers outscored the Indians 26-10 in the final frame.

Senior Sawyer Drake added 14 points, five assists, four rebounds and three blocks as Union improved to 2-3 on the year. Senior Sawyer Brey scored 11 points with six rebounds and four assists while fellow senior Kyle Morlock added 10 points, nine boards, four dimes and two blocks for the Panthers.

Towns County junior guard Kolby Moss poured in a game-high 27 points on 9-of-22 from the floor, 8-of-10 at the line but just 1-of-7 from downtown - his lone three com-



Pierson Allison (L) glides in for two of his 21 vs Towns; Kyle Morlock (R) is averaging 13 points and 8 rebounds so far. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

ever, would capitalize on less-than-stellar transition defense, outscoring the Panthers 16-5 in that department.

Union County trailed 11-7 in the first before closing on an 8-1 spurt to take a 15-12 lead after one. Towns would score the first five points of the second to regain the lead at 17-15 as the two teams swapped baskets to close out the half with the Indians leading 23-22.

The first points of the second half belonged to Towns to take a 25-22 advantage but the Panthers answered with a 14-4 run to open up a 36-29 lead before the Indians trimmed the margin to 43-39 at quarter's end.

Union began the fourth with four unanswered for a 47-39 advantage before Towns sliced its deficit in half at 49-45. The next six points went to the Panthers to spark a 20-4 onslaught that finished off the

Indians for good.

Panthers 76, Tallulah Falls 55 - Union County used a 28-point second quarter to record its first victory of the year as they welcomed four players back to its starting lineup following the football playoffs.

Allison and Morlock would score 17 points apiece with Allison going 9-of-10 from the line and picking up five steals. Drake would add 13 points and sophomore Lake Hughes would tack on eight.

Leading 19-15 after one, the Panthers would shoot a blistering 64-percent (9-for-14) from the floor during the second quarter as they closed the period on an 8-0 run to jump out to a 47-30 halftime advantage.

The Indians tried to make it interesting with six-straight to open the third but the Panthers answered back with a 10-2 spurt, extending its lead to 57-38.



Pierson Allison (L) glides in for two of his 21 vs Towns; Kyle Morlock (R) is averaging 13 points and 8 rebounds so far. Photos/Lowell Nicholson

Union County season statistical leaders through Friday's Towns County win.

Scoring: Allison 15.7 ppg, Morlock 12.7, Drake 10.7, Hughes 10.6. Rebounding: Morlock 7.7 rpg, Hemphill 6.3, Brey 5.4. Assists: Lariscy 2.4, Drake 2.3, Brey 2.0. Steals: Allison 2.7, Cox 2.5. Blocks: Morlock 0.7, FG%: Brey 65%, Drake 59%; FT%: Allison 86%; 3PT%: Allison 38%, Hughes 35%.

Up next - Union County will host Elbert County, who is coming off a Region Championship and a berth in the Class AA Final Four a year ago. Unfortunately for the Blue Devils, seven of their top eight scorers from last season have graduated, leaving an inexperienced roster to defend its 8-AA title.

Elbert is currently off to a 1-2 start with blowout losses at the hands of Hart County and Hebron Christian. Its lone victory was a 76-60 win over a 1-4 Westside, SC squad in the season opener.

Saturday, the Panthers will visit Monticello, who was a Sawyer Drake game-winning basket away from knocking off the Panthers in Monticello last season.

Currently, the Canes are off to a sluggish 1-5 start with two losses to Greene County and one apiece to Spartanburg Christian, Jones County and Oconee County. The win was a 75-66 victory over a 3-5 Jackson team.

Gone from last year's squad is the do-everything duo of Jay Fleetwood (16 ppg) and Kedron Jackson (10 ppg). In all, eight seniors graduated off last season's unit that finished 4-10 in Region 8-AA.

Returning is last year's leading rebounder, 6-2 forward Keon Maddox, who will be joined by first-year starters Jordin Thomas at guard and 6-3 center Johari Stone, among others.

Panthers 51, Fannin County 53 - No stats were available for the Union loss at Fannin County on Saturday, Dec. 7. Instead, here are the