

Sports

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Lady Panthers look to take a winning record into Battle of the States

Union halts three-game losing streak, can improve to 6-5 with wins on Monday and Thursday

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nghanews.com

Union County's girls saw their record drop from 3-2 last week to 3-5 this week but managed to right the ship with a three-point victory in Hayesville, NC on Saturday night.

Leading by as many as 10 in the third quarter, the Lady Panthers went ice-cold for much of the fourth quarter until a Bailey Daniel trey bailed out her team and allowed Union to escape North Carolina with the win.

Earlier in the week, the Lady Panthers fell to 1-2 inside Region 7-AAA when they suffered an ugly 77-27 loss to private school powerhouse Greater Atlanta Christian on Tuesday, then faltered late in a 64-57 loss to North Hall on Friday.

The Lady Panthers appeared to have control during the first half vs North Hall, but the Lady Trojans turned up the heat on the defensive end coming out of the intermission and Union was limited to just 23 second half points after scorching the nets for 34 points during the first two quarters. As a result, North Hall snatched the lead away during the final minute of the third and extended their advantage to as many as nine during the fourth.

This week Union hosts a pair of winnable games at home when they host Andrews, NC on Monday and Gilmer County on Thursday.

A pair of wins will send the Lady Panthers into the Battle of the States on a three-game winning streak with a 6-5 record as they seek their first ever BOTS Championship.

UC 43, Hayesville 40
Hayesville, NC - The Lady Panthers ventured across the border on Saturday and ended a three-game slide despite watching a 10-point cushion evaporate into thin air, forcing them to scratch-and-claw for a 43-40 victory.

With 1:19 to play and Union trailing by two, junior Bailey Daniel nailed a go-ahead trey from the right wing to put the Lady Panthers on top 38-37. Hayesville missed their go-ahead basket but a Union miss at the foul line left the door open for the home team.

A Lady Jacket jump shot was unsuccessful then Daniel knocked down a pair from the free throw line - giving the Lady Panthers a 40-37 lead with 30 seconds remaining.

Trailing by three, Hayesville went for the quick deuce but misfired from close range and were called for traveling after



Bailey Daniel auditions for the job of football long snapper as she saves the ball from going out-of-bounds by tossing it backwards through her legs at Hayesville. Later, she hit the go-ahead 3-pointer. Photo/Todd Forrest

securing the offensive board. Freshman Andelin Hill sank two clutch free throws to extend the advantage to five with 14 seconds left.

The Lady Jackets refused to surrender quietly and hit a corner trey with under 5 seconds to play to pull back within two. With 1.5 seconds left, Daniel hit the first of two free throws and Hayesville came down with the rebound as time expired. However, Lady Jacket coach Chad McClure was awarded a time out and one full second was put back on the clock with his team trailing by three.

Hayesville's full court, desperation heave was picked off by senior Ashley Fair to preserve the victory.

Union County led for most of the first three quarters after taking a 21-18 advantage into halftime and opening the third quarter on an 8-1 run that gave the Lady Panthers a comfortable 29-19 lead with 4:05 to play in the period. Both offenses would struggle to put points on the board for the remainder of the third but the Lady Jackets were able to seize momentum when they banked in a long 2-point jump shot at the buzzer to pull within six at 31-25.

Union's shooting woes continued well into the fourth and Hayesville capitalized with an 8-0 run to capture the lead at 33-31 with 3:52 to play. The Lady Panthers came up empty on the possession, but freshman Kait McCarter ripped the ball out of the hands of a Lady Jacket rebounder before she could find an open teammate on the outlet pass. The McCarter lay-up tied the game at 33-33 but Hayesville

immediately attacked the basket on the offensive end for a quick deuce to regain the lead.

Just inside of 3:00 to play, McCarter knotted the score once again when she rebounded a Bailey Daniel miss and went back up for two. The Lady Jackets missed the front-end of a 1-and-1 attempt but a Union turnover on the other end handed the ball back to Hayesville.

With 2:02 remaining, McCarter was whistled for her fifth foul, sending the freshman to the bench and sending the Lady Jackets to the line. Luckily, both shots were no good but the loose ball bounced out-of-bounds - last touched by Union.

A quick jumper off the in-bounds pass was no good but the Lady Panthers couldn't hit on the other end, and to make matters worse, they were called for a foul on the rebound - sending Hayesville back to the line, where they were in the double bonus.

This time, they were successful the first of two but managed to corral the miss to regain possession with 1:30 to play. Once again, Union was tagged with another foul and the Lady Jackets split their two attempts for a 37-35 lead with 1:28 to play.

As the Lady Panthers advanced the ball across mid-court, Hayesville committed an egregious mental blunder when they forgot about Daniel on the wing and the junior guard made them pay with what turned out to be the shot of the game.

Daniel led Union with 9 points and 2 steals, while Hill scored a career-high 7 points with a trey and four free throws.

Fair scored 6 points and

grabbed a team high 9 rebounds, McCarter had 4 points and 8 rebounds, and sophomore Adeline Dockrey added 4 points to go with 8 boards and 2 assists.

Freshman Brooke Dockrey finished with 5 points and 2 assists. Sophomore Jordan Rogers chipped in 4 points.

UC 57, North Hall 64
Daniel scored 19 of her team-high 25 points in the first half but it wasn't enough to hold off the Lady Trojans who rallied from six down to lead by as many as nine in the fourth quarter.

With 1:36 left in the third, McCarter gave Union a 43-40 advantage with a put-back but Daniel went to the bench with her fourth foul at the 1:04 mark and North Hall responded with a 6-0 spurt to close the period.

The Lady Trojans opened the fourth with a pair of perfect trips to the charity stripe to extend their lead to 50-43 with just under seven minutes to play. Daniel hit 1-of-2 at the line on the other end, then Brooke Dockrey drove the lane and scored on a nifty up-and-under, finger-roll lay-in. Unable to capitalize on a North Hall turnover, the Lady Trojans ended their mini-scoring drought with a bucket at the 4:50 mark but McCarter went back to work on the offensive glass and pulled her team back within four.

A missed 3-pointer by North Hall resulted in a long-rebound and a lay-up by Brooke Dockrey to make it a two-point game at 52-50 with 4:11 remaining. However, the next six points belonged to the Lady Trojans as they opened up a 58-50 lead with 2:48 showing on the clock.

On the ensuing Lady Pan-



Freshman post Kait McCarter (30) and junior guard Grace Wischmeyer (20) harass a North Hall dribbler during the first half of Friday's game. Seconds later, Wischmeyer swiped the ball away. Photo/Todd Forrest

thers possession, Daniel cut to the basket and converted a lay-up off a backdoor pass from the wing, then the defense forced a miss but Union was called for an illegal screen while trailing by six with under two minutes left.

Brooke Dockrey hit 1-of-2 at the line on the heels of a North Hall bucket but Fair picked up her fifth foul with 46 seconds to play and her team down by seven. The Lady Trojans essentially put the game away with two free throws to take a 62-53 lead.

McCarter would convert a put-back with 33 seconds left, then she added a lay-up as the clock ticked under 10 seconds, to bring the final score to 64-57.

For the game, Union County shot 21-for-39 from the floor (54 percent) but 24 turnovers were the difference maker. After a red-hot first half from beyond-the-arc, the Lady Panthers shot 0-for-7 from downtown in the second half and finished 4-for-14 overall - with all four treys coming from Daniel, who shot 4-of-7 for the game with 25 points and 2 steals.

McCarter posted another double-double with 14 points and 11 boards, Brooke Dockrey added 10 points and 2 assists, while Adeline Dockrey had 5 points and 8 rebounds.

Fair finished with 4 points, 4 boards, and 3 steals, junior Grace Wischmeyer led the team with 3 assists to go with one steal, Rogers hauled in 4 rebounds with one steal, and junior Maggie Beth Stuart had one rebound and one steal.

UC 27, GAC 77

Norcross - The Lady Spartans returned all five starters and the majority of the bench from last season's Class AA Final Four squad that eliminated Region 8-AA Champ Rabun County with a 67-53 victory in the Elite 8, so going into Tuesday night's rematch of the 2001 Class AA State Championship Game, the Lady Panthers knew they would have their hands full.

From the opening tip, it was all GAC, who led 32-3 after one quarter and 52-11 at the half.

Daniel led Union with 11 points on three treys, McCarter hit 4-of-6 at the line, en route to 6 points, Adeline Dockrey buried a trey in the third quarter - Union's highest scoring frame with nine - and finished with 5 points and a team-high 7 rebounds and one blocked shot.

Brooke Dockrey and Grace Wischmeyer added 2 points each and Fair finished with one free throw and 5 boards. Rogers led Union with 3 steals to go with 3 rebounds.

The Lady Panthers finished 4-for-22 from 3-point land and 8-for-40 overall. They also connected on 7-of-13 at the foul line.

Meanwhile, the Lady Spartans had four players in double-figures while hitting 17-for-23 at the line. They only connected on one trey but converted 28 baskets from inside the arc.

LOOKING AHEAD:

On Monday, the Lady Panthers hosted Andrews, NC

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Panthers' offensive balance, depth leads to victory at Hayesville

Union drops to 1-2 in region play following one-sided losses to North Hall, at GAC

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nghanews.com

Following a pair of blowout losses in region play, the Panthers ended their three-game slide in a non-region contest at Hayesville, NC.

Sitting at 3-6 with two games to play before the Battle of the States opens on Dec. 28, Union can possibly even their record before the end of the 2016 calendar year.

After suffering a 75-31 loss at Greater Atlanta Christian on Tuesday and giving up 13 treys in a 70-47 defeat to North Hall on Friday, the Panthers still have a chance to build some momentum before dealing with the meat and potatoes of the region schedule.

Union also expects its roster to return to full strength this week after playing the first month short-handed. And with East Hall, Lumpkin County, and Dawson County awaiting the Panthers in early January, Union will need to gel as much as possible over the next two weeks to avoid falling to 1-5 in region play.

UC 52, Hayesville 39
Hayesville, NC - With the game tied at 35-35 early in the fourth quarter, Union County ripped off a 17-2 run to take command, 52-37 with less than a minute to play.

Early on, the Yellow Jackets took a page out of North Hall's playbook and came out firing away from beyond-the-arc and led by as many as six in the first half. The Panthers would weather the storm, and with Head Coach Casey Jones using an 11-man rotation against a Hayesville squad that went only 8-plays deep, fatigue became an issue for the Jackets - especially in the second half.

"I don't care what kind of shape you're in, it's difficult to play



One vs five. Crawford Colwell takes on the entire North Hall defense by himself. The junior forward led the Panthers in scoring during all three games last week. Photo/Todd Forrest

32 minutes," Jones said. Trailing 19-14, less than two minutes into the second period, the Panthers exploded with 12-unanswered points to take a 26-19 lead with 92 seconds remaining in the half.

With Union on top 26-22 to open the third, both teams exchanged baskets until a pair of Hayesville free throws pulled them within one at 32-31.

Junior RJ Banton answered with a 3-point play when he drove inside and was hacked on his way up for two. Banton would finish with a career-high 12 points while going 4-for-5 at the line.

The and-1 would be the final points of the period and Union took a 35-31 lead into the fourth.

The Jackets knocked down two at the line then converted a Panther turnover into a lay-up on the other end to even the score at

35-35 with 6:51 to play. Senior Lawson Baeninger responded with a lay-up on the other end - he would eventually score 12 of his 15 points in the final frame.

Hayesville came up empty on the front-end of a 1-and-1 and Baeninger made them pay once again when he drove inside and nailed a short jumper for a four-point Union lead.

Banton made it a six-point game when he crashed the boards and scored on a put-back with 4:55 remaining.

The Jackets momentarily stopped the bleeding with two free throws and appeared poised to make it a one-possession game when an errant Panther pass sailed out-of-bounds. However, Union's defense forced a turnover that eventually led to a 1-for-2 trip to the line by Banton at the 4:09

mark.

The teams would exchange misses before the Panthers turned it over once again. However, junior Crawford Colwell provided some heroics on the defensive end when he deflected a Hayesville pass into the air then managed to come down with the loose ball. Leading by five with the clock under three minutes, Coach Jones began to play keep away from a tired Yellow Jackets squad. Baeninger would eventually use attack the basket where he drew the contact and converted the hoop. The old-fashioned 3-point play extended the Union lead to 45-37 with less than two minutes remaining.

A Hayesville miss on one end of the floor, and a Crawford Colwell put-back on the other stretched the Panthers' lead to 10 with 1:10 to play.

Baeninger would connect



RJ Banton with two of his career-high 12 Hayesville. Photo/Todd Forrest

on 5-of-6 free throws over the final 40 seconds to help preserve the Union County victory.

Crawford Colwell led the Panthers with 16 points while junior Cole Wright scored four, junior Cole Dockrey had 3 points, and freshman Sawyer Drake added 2 points.

Meanwhile junior Riley Barrett and Wright took turns guarding Hayesville standout Josh Cottrell, who finished with 23 points, but Jones' defensive rotation eventually wore down Cottrell, who played all 32 minutes, and his only field goal of the fourth quarter came on a meaningless lay-up in the final seconds.

did a really good job on him."

UC 47, North Hall 70

The Trojans torched the nets at Union County High School with eight first half treys to leap out to a 40-20 halftime lead.

North Hall would finish with 13 3-point baskets as they led by as many as 31 in the fourth quarter.

"We had some film on (North Hall) so we knew that (No. 15) was a good player and they had a couple good shooters, but we had no idea they could shoot like that and would hit 13 (treys)," Jones said.

A trey by Baeninger to open the game gave Union its only lead of the night as the Trojans answered with a three of their own. With the game tied at 7-7, North Hall closed the first on a 15-3 run

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