

Sports

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Panthers refuse to back down; outscore Warriors' varsity in scrimmage

Union's strong showing may come at heavy cost as Luther Jones injures right leg

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This time last year, the Panthers were returning from White County with their heads held low and their tails between their legs.

In the 2012 scrimmage, the Warriors dominated the Panthers for three quarters, taking a 35-0 lead. White County wore down Union's defense with a relentless attack of physical, smash mouth football.

As it turned out, the Warriors had a very good team last year, finishing third in 8-AAA behind State Champion Buford and Region Champion North Hall.

White County returns several key players from last year and hope that their physical play can keep them in the mix for a 8-AAA title in 2013.

However, the Panthers proved that this year's squad can play physical football, and play it well. Nowadays, if you punch the Panthers in the stomach, they will be happy to return the favor, something that was missing at times in 2012.

The proof was in a 14-10 score that Union held over White before the J.V. teams entered for the fourth quarter.

"After what happened to us at our scrimmage with White last year, tonight's game was a testament to how far we have come and how hard we have worked," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said.

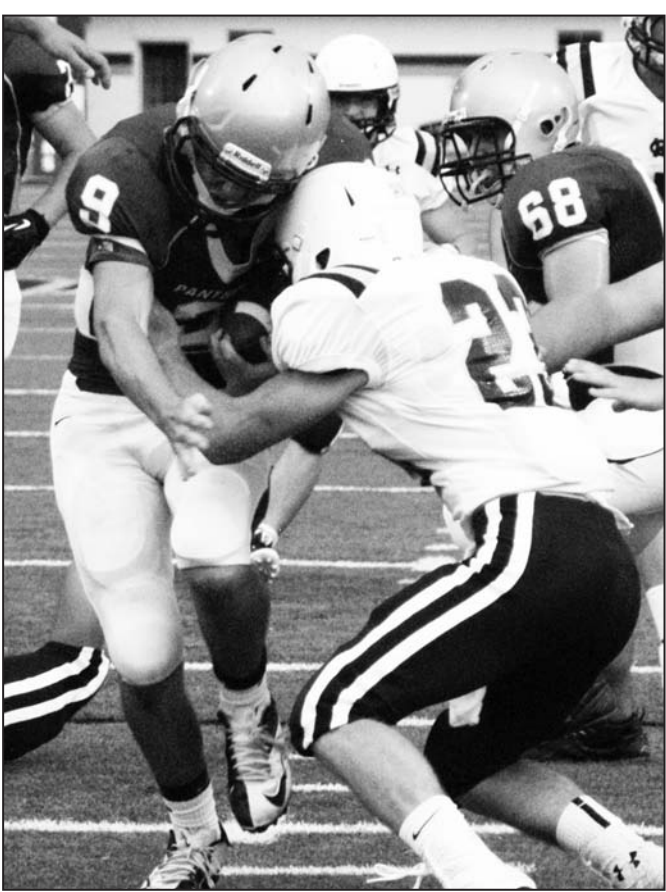
And it wasn't how much Union scored, but how they scored them. Both times the Panther ball carrier out-muscled the defender(s) on their way to pay dirt.

Sophomore quarterback Joseph Mancuso bulldozed his way through 10-yards worth of Warriors for Union's first score.

The Panthers' second score came on 4th and goal when sophomore Sam Gilbert went up and snagged a pass from Mancuso, took a hit, but held onto the ball and fought his way across the goal line.

"I thought we competed really hard tonight," Allison said. "Both of our quarterbacks (Ralston Drake and Mancuso) came in and did some really good things. We also did some bad things so we're just going to keep working, getting better and better and then see where we are at."

Unfortunately, the Panthers' physicality took a blow when senior All-State lineman Luther Jones went down what



Sophomore quarterback Joseph Mancuso plows his way into the endzone, putting Union on the board in the first quarter. Photo/Todd Forrest

appeared to be a knee injury. After being carted off to the locker rooms late in the second quarter, Jones returned to the sideline on crutches, where it was revealed that he had possibly broken his femur.

The following day he got some good news when X-rays revealed no break, just a bone contusion. As of press time, Jones says he wants to play this Friday, but there has been no official word on his status for the Towns County game.

Jones was injured in the final 90 seconds of the second quarter with White County at its own 25-yard line and the score knotted at 7-7.

After Jones went down, the Warriors connected on consecutive passes to move into Panther territory. White picked up another first down and were in a 3rd-and-3 situation with 32 seconds remaining. The Warriors went back to the air but senior Chase Stancil broke up the pass, forcing an incompletion.

On fourth down, the Warrior kicker came on the field and connected from 42 yards away, on a kick that only traveled 43 yards and scraped the back of the crossbar.

Trailing 10-7 entering the third quarter, the Panthers were

aided by a holding call on White County that forced the Warriors into a punt.

Union took over at its own 30-yard line and after back-to-back runs by sophomore running back Nick Whittle went nowhere, the Panthers were forced into 3rd-and-11.

That's when Mancuso hooked up with junior Brett Dietz for 19 yards and a first down.

Facing a 3rd-and-6, Mancuso found junior Robert Prunier for an 11-yard pickup, moving the chains again.

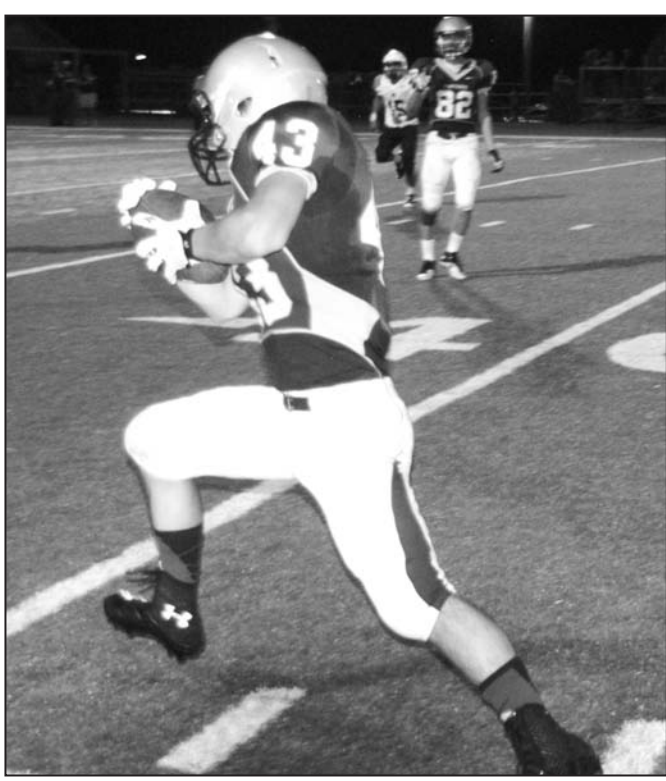
The ensuing play saw Mancuso get sacked for a loss of 11 yards, but the Warriors were called for pass interference on the next play when Gilbert raced down the near sideline, where he was interfered with inside the White County 20.

The 15-yard penalty wasn't enough to give the Panthers a first down so facing 2nd-and-6, junior Chase Barnett's run was stopped for a loss, and after an incompletion, Union was in another fourth down situation.

Mancuso found Dietz again for a fresh set of downs, this time at the Warrior 28-yard line.

Barnett reeled in a Mancuso pass for another first down, taking the Panthers to the White County 16-yard line.

Once again, the Warriors



Junior receiver Robert Prunier tip-toes down the sidelines following a completion. Prunier made several third and fourth down receptions for the Panthers. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sophomore Sam Gilbert battles his way across the goal line for Union's second touchdown of the night. Photo/Todd Forrest

forced Union into a fourth down situation but a pass to Prunier was completed, setting up the Panthers with 1st-and-goal from the 3-yard line.

After a run for a yard and two incompletes, you guessed it, Union was looking at another fourth down.

From two yards out, Mancuso hit Gilbert at the goal line. The sophomore receiver climbed the ladder to snare the pass, and back-peddled his across the goal line with ball in hand despite taking a shot from a Warrior linebacker.

As the third quarter ended and the varsity squad gave way to the J.V., Union held a 14-10

advantage over the Warriors. White County would benefit from Panther turnovers and penalties and the Warrior JV unit was able to put it in the endzone three times in the final period.

"White County is a very good team and I thought we showed tonight that we can be a physical team, but there are still a few mental mistakes that we can correct," Allison said.

Following the opening kickoff of the game, the Panthers overcame more adversity right off the bat when White took advantage of a Panther interception on Union's first play from scrimmage, leading to an 11-yard scoring rush on their third play of



Not what Panther fans want to see: Luther Jones injured his femur and is questionable for Towns County.



Quarterback Ralston Drake splits snaps with Mancuso.

the game.

The two teams would exchange punts. With 4:46 to play in the first quarter, the Warriors fumbled on the first play, setting up the Panthers with prime field position, but Union suffered from a sack on 4th-and-9.

White would give the ball right back when Stancil got back in on the action. This time the senior forced a fumble and it was recovered by sophomore Andrew Brown at the Warrior 47-yard line.

Facing a 3rd-and-2, Mancuso hooked up with Gilbert for a first down.

Facing its second of many fourth downs, junior Jacob Rogers took Mancuso's pass inside the 15-yard line as time expired in the first quarter.

The second quarter opened with Mancuso scoring from 14 yards out on a quarterback draw, tying the game at 7-7. "Now our attention turns to Towns County," Allison told his team. "Starting tomorrow I want Towns to be the only thing on your minds."

Kickoff for Union vs. Towns will be Friday at 7:30 at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

Softball: Lady Panthers begin 2-0 in Region

By Todd Forrest
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Following a 4-1 home loss to Walnut Grove on Friday, the Union County Lady Panthers traveled to Lexington for a doubleheader with the Lady Patriots.

The meeting opened Union's Region 8-AA action and the Lady Panthers are off to a good start, especially with defending 8-AA Champions Jefferson coming to town on Tuesday.

It took eight innings for Union to dispose of Oglethorpe in the first contest, but the Lady Panthers posted four in the eighth for a 4-0 win.

Freshman Laken Chambers went the distance for Union County, throwing a one-hitter, striking out seven, and not surrendering a walk.

Madison Rich's RBI single scored Allie Stroman in the eighth. Then with the bases loaded and two outs, Halle King doubled to clear the bases and giving the Lady Panthers a 4-0 lead.

With two outs and two on, Chambers induced a grounder back to the circle, for the final out of the game.

In the second meeting, Union rallied from a 4-1 deficit by posting six runs in the sixth, en route to a 7-4 victory.

Junior Crystal Busbee got the win, striking out two, walking one, and allowing 11 hits. She also went 3-for-4 at the plate with two doubles and 2 RBIs.

Stroman went 2-for-3 with 2 RBIs, a run, and a double. Courtney Busbee finished 1-for-3 with a double and 2 RBIs.

Kelsey Nix was 1-for-4 with a run, Kendra Tanner went 1-for-3 with an RBI, and Karley Nix scored twice, Rich



Crystal Busbee



Karley Nix



Halle King



Sophomore Maddie Garrett at bat vs Walnut Grove. Photo/Todd Forrest

added a single and a walk, King was 2-for-4. Meanwhile, freshmen Chambers, Lydia Arrowood, and Maddie Horinek tacked on a run each for the Lady Panthers.

In Union's 4-1 loss to Walnut Grove, the Lady Warriors put up one run in the first, one in the fourth, and two in

the sixth. The Lady Panthers made it a 2-1 game with a run in the fifth but that's as close as they would get.

Chambers drove in Union's lone run and Allie Stroman went 2-for-2 with a run and a walk.

Rich, King, and Crystal



Kendra Tanner

Busbee, who took the loss from the circle, each singled.

On Tuesday at 6:45 p.m., Union faces Jefferson in a rematch of last year's 8-AA Championship Game that the Lady Dragons won 1-0.

After visiting Fannin on Wednesday, Region play resumes when Union hosts Greene County for a Thursday night doubleheader.

First pitch will be at 4 p.m. The second contest is scheduled for 6 p.m.

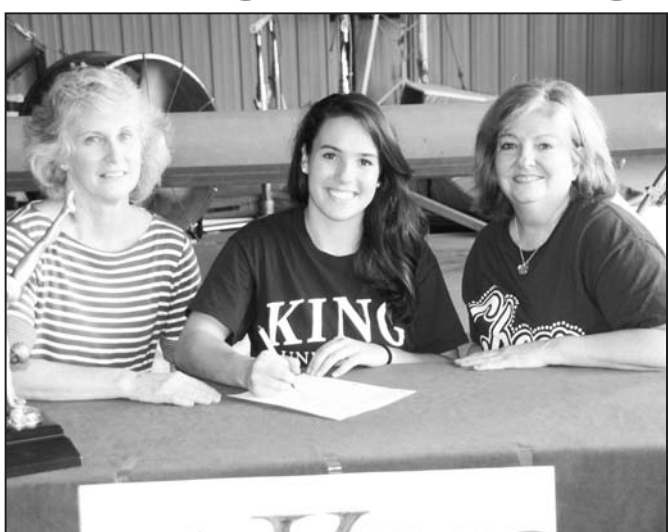
2013 UCHS Football schedule

- Aug. 30th vs Towns County 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 6th @ Fannin County 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 13th @ Andrews N.C. 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 20th BYE WEEK
- Sept. 27th @ Washington-Wilkes 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 4th vs Oglethorpe County
- Oct. 11th @ Riverside Military Academy 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 18th vs Greene County 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 25th vs Rabun County 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 1st @ Social Circle 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 8th vs Jefferson 7:30 p.m.

2013 UCHS Softball schedule

- Aug. 27th: vs Jefferson 5 p.m.
- Aug. 28th: @ Fannin County
- Aug. 29th: vs Greene County (DH) 4 p.m.
- Sept. 5th: vs Rabun County 6 p.m.
- Sept. 6-7th: @ Oconee County Tournament TBA
- Sept. 10th: @ Social Circle (DH) 4 p.m.
- Sept. 11th: @ White County 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 12th: @ Jefferson 6:45 p.m.
- Sept. 16th: @ East Hall 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 19th: vs Washington-Wilkes (DH) 4 p.m.
- Sept. 24th: @ Rabun County 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 26th: @ North Murray 5 p.m.

Davis signs with King



Former Union County High School cheerleader and gymnast Cassie Davis (center) recently signed with King University in Bristol, Tenn. for Acrobatics and Tumbling. 10 institutions currently recognize Acrobatics and Tumbling as a sport. Teams compete in a meet format against one or two other teams. Each team competes between six to eight times a year. Davis was joined by Mountain Gymnastics' Shelly Thomas (left) and Union County Cheer Coach Elizabeth Platt (right).