

Sports

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Panthers' offense overwhelms Andrews; improve to 3-0

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Junior quarterback Joseph Mancuso threw for three touchdowns and rushed for an 81-yard score in the first half as Union County (3-0) put up 42 points before the break, en route to a 49-20 victory over Andrews, NC. The Panthers are now 3-0 for the second time in three years and can improve to 4-0 for just third time since 2000.

With junior running back Nick Whittle (MCL) sidelined for at least three more weeks, sophomore running backs Nic Rodriguez, Bo Lynch, and senior Chase Barnett did more than enough to pick up the slack. Union's offense gashed the Wildcats with 233 rushing yards on 30 carries. Rodriguez scored the Panthers final two touchdowns of the game, breaking off a 17-yard score in the final minutes of the first half before adding a 10-yard carry for six more in the latter stages of the third quarter. On Union's second possession of the game, Barnett reeled in a one-handed catch along the Wildcats' sideline and took it 17 yards before capping of the drive by powering his way into the endzone from the six-yard line.

Lynch carried 13 times for a career high 77 yards and Mancuso carried twice for 96 yards - most coming on an 82 yard touchdown in the second quarter.

With the offense scoring 28 unanswered points to open the contest and the ground game churning out 7.8 yards a carry, the



In memory of the victims of September 11, 2001, senior Robert Prunier carries Old Glory as he leads the Panthers onto the field to take on Andrews. Photo/Todd Forrest

Panthers' coaching staff didn't need Mancuso to air it out. He attempted just 20 passes - his lowest total as a starter.

"I like it when the other guys tote it and keep Joe safe," Coach Allison said. "We want to continue to try and run the football because it opens up our passing game. The offensive line was a big factor in that. They all graded out very good and our center, Eli Robledo is new this year and he played very well."

Back to last Friday vs Andrews - Mancuso connected on 13 of his 20 pass attempts for 167 yards, three touchdowns and no interceptions.

It was 2012 when Andrews last visited Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium and then-senior Lalo Rivera took the opening kick 85 yards for a score. And for a moment, the Wildcats experienced deja vu. Junior kick returner Josh Daniel took the opening kick more than 80 yards before getting forced out of bounds at the Andrews 16-yard line. A give to Barnett for 5 yards was followed by an 11-yard scoring strike from Mancuso to senior receiver Jacob Rogers - spotting the Panthers a 7-0 lead after two plays from scrimmage.

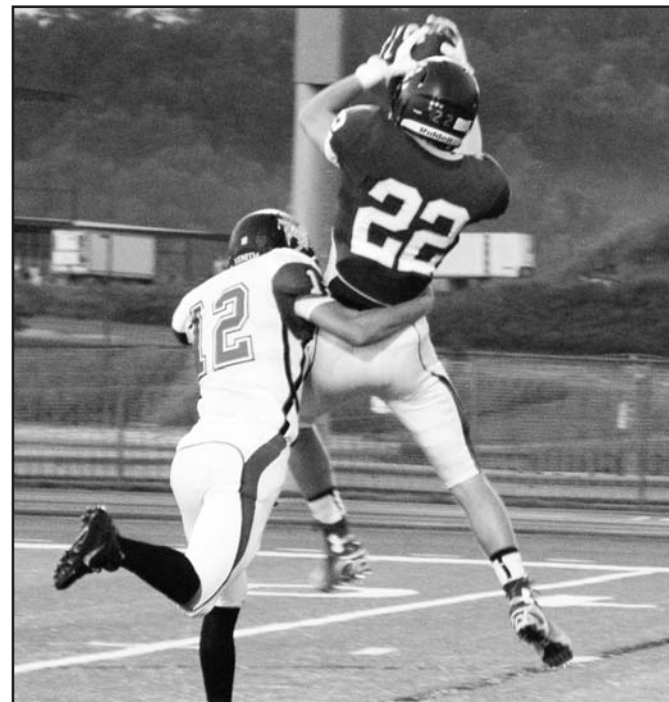
The visitors first possession ended with a three-and-out and a

punt that allowed the Panthers' offense to set up shop at midfield. Barnett's one-handed catch went for 17 yards and 26-yard hookup between Mancuso and Rogers gave the offense a first-and-goal and Barnett bulldozed his way across the goal line to put Union on top at 14-0.

The Panthers' defense forced another three-and-out and allowed the offense to take over near midfield once again. Lynch carried three straight times for gains of 9, 2, and 11 yards before Mancuso hit junior Sam Gilbert for 7 yards and senior Brett Dietz for 18 yards. The drive was capped off with a 10-yard touchdown pass from Mancuso to Prunier on third-and-goal to give the Panthers a 21-0 lead with 2:03 left in the first quarter.

The purple swarm defense moved Andrews backwards and forced another punt on a fourth-and-13. This time the Panthers' offense was rewarded with the football at the 45-yard line with 38 seconds left in the first quarter. A pair of handoffs to Lynch to open the drive quickly put Union into Wildcat territory. An offside against Andrews, an 11-yard completion to Prunier, and a 12-yard run from Lynch moved Union inside Andrews' 15-yard line. A first down give to Lynch was stopped after a short gain but on second down, Mancuso connected with Gilbert on a 12-yard touchdown pass.

"Defensively we played



Senior receiver Jacob Rogers climbs the ladder to grab a pass from Joseph Mancuso in the first half vs Andrews. Photo/Todd Forrest

really well on the first four series and I thought the offense did well too, but we still need to make some improvements and some adjustments." Coach Allison said.

Leading 28-0, the Panther defense was caught napping and on the first play from scrimmage, Andrews went 78 yards on the ground to make it a 28-7 game at the 9:41 mark of the second.

However, Mancuso would not be outdone, and on Union's first play of the ensuing drive, the junior quarterback found a hole and raced 82 yards down the middle of the field for his fourth touchdown of the half and his first rushing touchdown of the season. With 9:26 to play before the break, Union's lead was 35-7.

The Wildcats followed with a 13-play scoring drive of 80 yards that was aided by a personal foul flag against the Panther defense.

The drive consumed more than six minutes and after Dietz blocked the extra point attempt, Prunier took the kickoff all the way to the Andrews 24-yard line with 2:34 left before halftime. On first down, Rodriguez was dropped for a short loss but the sophomore would get another chance to shine. An 8-yard completion to Rogers brought up a third down and the Panthers' coaching staff decided to feed Rodriguez once again, and this time it paid off as the sophomore found the endzone from 17 yards out.

Leading 42-13 at half-time, the outcome was all but

determined, the only question remaining was how many points Union would put up in the home opener.

Andrews received the second half kickoff but a fumble on their first offensive play was recovered by Dietz. The Panthers and Wildcats each went on to turn the ball over on downs, not once, but twice in the third quarter. With 4:14 to play in the third, an Andrews punt gave Union the ball at its own 44-yard line. The Panthers' final scoring drive began with a short completion to Prunier that he turned into a 19-yard pickup, then a 14-yard carry by Lynch, and after a false start, Mancuso carried for 14 more yards. Lynch rushed for 4 yards and Rodriguez for 8 yards and then 2 yards for a touchdown and a 49-13 score.

"Having a big lead doesn't necessarily make things easier," Coach Allison said. "We let up a little bit on defense in the second quarter and we let up a bit on offense in the third quarter. We've got to learn to overcome those kinds of things."

Trailing 49-13 with a running clock in the fourth quarter, Andrews added a 56-yard touchdown run with 1:17 left in the game, resulting in a 49-20 final.

Seven different Panthers caught a pass with Prunier, Rodriguez, and Rogers hauling in three a-piece. Rogers went for 44 yards,

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Union captains: Robert Prunier, Jacob Rogers, Luke Chatham, and Chase Barnett. Photo/Todd Forrest

Union's struggles vs Social Circle continue despite perfect weekend

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The saying 'bad things come in twos' suited the Union County Lady Panthers softball team last week when they hosted Social Circle, the defending 8-AA champs.

After Union nearly rallied from a 3-0 deficit in game one for their first Region 8-AA loss of the year, the bats went silent in game two and the Lady Panthers suffered their first and second region losses and fell from atop the 8-AA standings. The two defeats were Union's fifth and sixth consecutive losses to Social Circle.

Over the weekend the Lady Panthers were able to right the ship and knock off rival Fannin County and Class AAAA's Gilmer County to improve to 19-4 on the season.

Union County held its Senior Night festivities on Monday when they hosted Lumpkin County. On Wednesday, Union will travel to Pickens County before rounding out region play next Tuesday with a doubleheader at Washington Wilkes on Sept. 23.

UC 2, Social Circle 3

The Lady Redskins manufactured a run in the first inning with a one-out walk, a sacrifice, and a two-out single.

The Lady Panthers were held hitless until the fourth inning when senior Kelsey Nix doubled with two outs. Sophomore Kendra Tanner followed but was robbed of extra bases and an



Senior Halle King drove in a run in the first game of the doubleheader with Social Circle. Photo/Todd Forrest

RBI when the centerfielder made a difficult running catch while reaching across her body.

In the top half of the sixth the Lady Redskins struck for two more runs sparked by a one-out triple. An RBI single and a stolen base followed, allowing Social Circle to add an insurance with a two-out RBI single.

Trailing 3-0 with six outs left, junior Maddie Garrett drew a one-out walk, senior Courtney Busbee singled, and senior Kelsey Nix laced an RBI single - bringing in Garrett. A base running mishap resulted in the second out of the inning but Kendra Tanner singled and senior Halle King singled in Braden Poteete - who

was running for Kelsey Nix.

After making a game of things in the sixth, sophomore Laken Chambers returned to the circle and mowed down two of the three Lady Redskins she faced, the third popped up.

In the bottom of the seventh, junior Karley Nix was able to reach on an error with one out, but a pop up and a fly out followed and Social Circle took game one.

Chambers allowed seven hits, walked one, and struck out four in seven innings of work.

UC 0, Social Circle 1

Going into the Social



Junior shortstop Karley Nix reaches base during the seventh inning of game one vs Social Circle last Tuesday. Photo/Todd Forrest

Circle doubleheader, all Union needed was a split to remain in the driver's seat for the top spot and home field advantage throughout the Region playoffs.

Unfortunately, the bats went silent in game two.

Chambers brought her A-game from the circle despite throwing a complete game in game one. The sophomore struck out seven, walked one, allowed six hits, and one run.

Kelsey Nix did her best to keep the Lady Panthers in contention with a 2-for-3 day at the plate. Sophomore Lydia Arrowood and King also contributed a hit.

The Lady Redskins loaded the bases with one out in the fourth inning but only managed a run after Union recorded two outs on the base paths.

The Lady Panthers loaded the bases with two outs in the second inning when Kelsey Nix, King, and Arrowood each singled but didn't score. Kelsey Nix singled again in the fourth but Union could only produce one base runner the rest of the way, and it came when Courtney Busbee was hit by a pitch in the sixth inning.

UC 3, Fannin County 2

Union County hosted a

Arrowood doubled and scored in the third and Crystal Busbee scored on a sacrifice fly by Garrett for a 3-0 Union lead after three.

Fannin got runs two back in the sixth but Lawn induced a groundout to escape without further damage.

Karley Nix, Chambers, Garrett, and Arrowood each went 1-for-3. Tanner finished 2-for-3.

UC 3, Gilmer County 1

Chambers struck out five and walked five but didn't allow an earned run in seven innings from the circle. The sophomore improved to 14-4 on the year.

The Lady Panthers got a run in the fourth when Garrett singled with two outs. Crystal Busbee kept the inning alive with another single and Kelsey Nix drove in Garrett.

Tied at 1-1, Chambers doubled to lead off the sixth inning and Poteete entered as a courtesy runner and scored on a Courtney Busbee sacrifice fly.

Union added an insurance run in the sixth when Arrowood singled and scored.

Crystal Busbee and Chambers each recorded a two-hit game while Courtney Busbee and Kelsey Nix added an RBI a piece.



Sophomore Kendra Tanner singles against SC. Photo/Todd Forrest