

# Sports

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## Lady Panthers win five straight; showdown with Rabun up next

Union scores a pair of road wins; will host Rabun on Friday with top spot in 8-AA on the line

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After demolishing Greene County on the road, the Lady Panthers made a statement last Saturday with a 54-41 victory at Hayesville, NC - setting the stage for a Friday night clash at Union County High School between the best of the best in Region 8-AA.

Rabun (10-8, 5-0) will host Social Circle on Tuesday while Union (15-5, 6-1) will get Tuesday off when the guys go on the road to Riverside Military Academy, but the extra day of practice wasn't enough when the Lady Panthers fell at Rabun back on Jan. 9.

The Lady Wildcats edged Union 47-41, despite trailing for the majority of the contest.

Union was able to open up a double-digit lead in the first half and maintained an advantage at 18-11 entering the second frame, 27-22 at the half and 36-34 after three.

Two starters would foul out for Union County as Rabun attempted 25 free throws to Union's four.

"We've just got to play better this time around," Union County Head Coach David Tucker said. "In the first (meeting) we were called for six offensive fouls, the free throw (differential) was unbelievable, and we still had a chance to win, but that's just part of the game."

Entering the first meet-



Lisa Nalaschi



Senior Brooke Maddox with a layup. The Lady Panthers guard put up game highs in both points (17) and assists (8) during Union's upsidy win at Greene County. Photo/Todd Forrest

ing, the Lady Panthers were riding a three-game winning streak after falling to Hayesville (13-6) in late December. In the loss, Union came up on the wrong end a thrilling finish during round two of the Battle of the States that denied the UCHS ladies their first ever BOTS title.

This time around, Union hosts Rabun coming off five-straight wins - including a convincing 13-point victory in front of packed house at Hayesville High School.

"Rabun is going to bring their A-game and they know that we're going to bring ours," Coach Tucker said. "We just need to keep focused, don't make excuses and be glad that we're in position to be number one."

### Lady Panthers 54 Hayesville, NC 41

Hayesville, NC - Union meant business from the opening tip - leading wire-to-wire thanks to a 22-6 onslaught in the first 8 minutes of the contest.

Nothing silences the home crowd like five treys and an early 16-point lead, and that's exactly what the visitors handed out to their hosts.

"That showed what these girls are made of," Coach

Tucker said. "We went up there and got a win where it's always tough to play. Our shooters got us off to a good start and we were able to take care of them. Everybody did their part."

Senior Kaitlyn Day connected twice from downtown - drawing the foul on her first shot, resulting in a 4-point play. Fellow seniors Lisa Nalaschi and Brooke Maddox scored six and three, respectively, while junior Layne Colwell nailed a pair of treys during the first frame.

A pair of buckets from



Senior Madison Lariscy and freshman Bailey Daniel on the defensive end during a recent game. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sophomore Holly Stroman dished off six assists at Hayesville and five at Greene County. She also scored 10 at Greene to go with two boards and a steal. Photo/Todd Forrest

Nalaschi and a basket by Maddox were the only Union points of the second stanza as the Lady Yellow Jackets fought their way back to within single digits, 28-20.

Nalaschi would go on to record her second double-double of the weekend with 16 points and 12 boards.

Towns County transfer Stephanie Patton paced Hayesville with 7 points in the second period. The former Lady Indian standout and 2013 First Team All-Region selection in 8-A went on to score a team-high

17 points.

The third quarter saw Union extend its lead back into double-digits where it stayed for much of the second half. The Lady Jackets got within eight during the final quarter but pinpoint accuracy at the free throw line from the Lady Panthers kept the home team at bay.

Union hit 17-of-22 at the charity stripe in the fourth quarter alone. They would finish 20-25 for the game.

Day hit her third trey of the game and went 2-for-2 at the line, junior Kim Coyne, and Nalaschi added a basket each to round out the third quarter scoring.

Hayesville was held to three baskets in the third and Union entered the fourth on top, 37-26.

The Lady Panthers stretched their advantage to as many as 16 points after the Lady Yellow Jackets were able to get within eight at the midway point of the fourth.

Day, who finished with a game-high 20 points, went 8-for-8 at the line in the quarter to help seal the deal. Down the stretch, Maddox hit 3-of-4 free throws, Nalaschi went 4-for-6, and Stroman was 2-of-4.

SCORING: Day 20, Nalaschi 16, Maddox 8, La Colwell 6, Coyne 2, Stroman 2



Kaitlyn Day

REBOUNDING: Nalaschi 12, Day 4, La Colwell 4, Maddox 3, Lariscy 1 ASSISTS: Stroman 6, Maddox 3, STEALS: Maddox 3, Colwell 3, Day 2 BLOCKS: Nalaschi 2.

### Lady Panthers 64 Greene County 16

Greensboro - When the Lady Panthers made the trip to Greene County, they didn't look like the team that had been on a bus for more than 3 hours.

Union connected on 10-of-21 shots from beyond the arc during the first three quarters - which was more than enough to take care of an overmatched Lady Tigers squad.

Barely breaking a sweat, the Lady Panthers finished with a 2-to-1 assist-to-turnover ratio (17-to-8) and recorded 16 steals as a team.

Union outscored the Lady Tigers 19-5 in the first quarter and took a 34-8 lead into the break.

A 24-7 third quarter added insult to injury for a proud Greene County squad that is battling Washington Wilkes, Oglethorpe County, and Social Circle for one of the final two playoff spots behind Rabun and Union.

Stroman and Nalaschi hit one trey and a pair of deuces

See Crunch time, page 9A

## Panthers drop fourth in-a-row; look to get back on track vs RMA, Rabun

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The Union County men continue to struggle since falling at Fannin County back on Jan. 16, and have since dropped their next three contests - extending their skid to four.

On Friday, the Panthers went on the road to face first place Greene County who had plenty of motivation this time around after Union embarrassed the Tigers 76-55 in Blairsville on Jan. 3.

In game two, Greene was able to keep the Panthers at bay in a 67-61 game to drop Union to 5-3 in Region play, just ahead of Washington Wilkes, who is 4-3 in 8-AA.

With Greene County's win, they move one step closer to claiming the top spot in 8-AA and hosting the Region Tournament. The No. 1 mens squad earns the right to host.

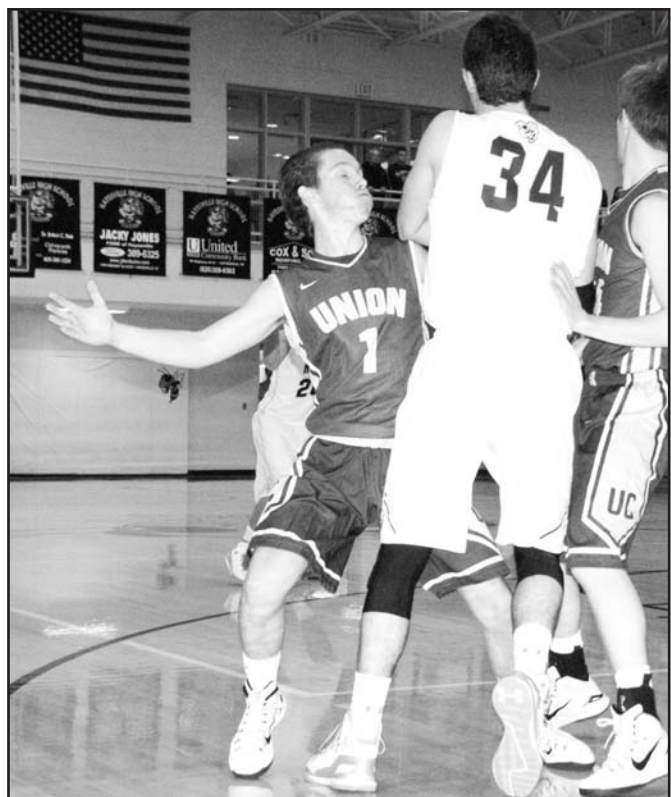
On Saturday, Union's road trip continued with another revenge game at Hayesville, NC.

The Panthers (12-9, 5-3) pulled away from the Yellow Jackets 57-45 at The Pit last month. In the rematch, Hayesville (14-5) protected their home court by pulling away in a 58-43 game.

The six-game road trip



Lake Arnick



Kyle Hamby (1) and Ralston Drake (right) defend Hayesville's Zach Cottrell last Saturday night. Photo/Todd Forrest

comes to a close on Tuesday with a trip to last place Riverside Military Academy (1-7, 5-12). The Panthers will finally return to the friendly confines of Union County High School on Friday when they host Rabun County. Despite their recent woes, a win over the Wildcats (14-6, 6-1) puts Union back in the hunt for the No. 2 seed in next month's Region 8-AA Tournament.

"We're still in decent shape and still have a shot to wrap up second or third place," Union County Head Coach Casey Jones said. "But there's not going to be a game the rest of the way where we can't afford to not play our best defensively."

Saturday, the Panthers hit the road again when they visit Washington Wilkes in a meeting that could have implications from the second spot, all the way down to the sixth, and possibly the seventh spot in Region

8-AA - depending on Tuesday and Friday's results.

### Panthers 61 Greene County 67

Greensboro - The Tigers trailed after the first quarter but turned it on to pull away, then fought off the Panthers down the stretch in a showdown between the first and third place teams in 8-AA.

Union got 23 points from senior Hunter Hughes, who dropped 35 on the Tigers in Blairsville. Hughes' backcourt mate, senior Kyle Hamby put up 21 but it wasn't enough.

"We shot the ball a little bit better in the first game," Coach Jones said. "We didn't shoot the ball terrible down there but naturally, they are going to shoot the ball better on their home court."

Hamby scored 9 points in the first half but didn't get much help and Union trailed 26-19 at



Hunter Hughes draws contact from two taller defenders as he takes it strong to the basket at Hayesville. Photo/Todd Forrest

the break.

"They outscored us 15-7 in the second quarter and we were never able to overcome that gap," Coach Jones said. "Against a team that athletic, you want to have a bit of a lead on them because we just wound up trading buckets with them in the fourth quarter."

Hamby would hit three treys in the third quarter while Hughes scored five but the Panthers were unable to put a dent into the deficit and entered the fourth quarter, trailing 43-35.

Hughes carried Union in the final 8 minutes with 15 points - going 7-for-7 at the foul line. Hamby connected on his fifth and final 3-pointer, Chase Shook chipped in 6 points, including a trey, Tyler Odom added 3 points before fouling out, and Ralston Drake scored 2 points.

"I think we played well defensively holding them to 67 points," Coach Jones said.

"They've been scoring a lot of points this year and scored 90 against Rabun."

SCORING: Hughes 23, Hamby 21, Odom 9, Shook 6, Drake 2

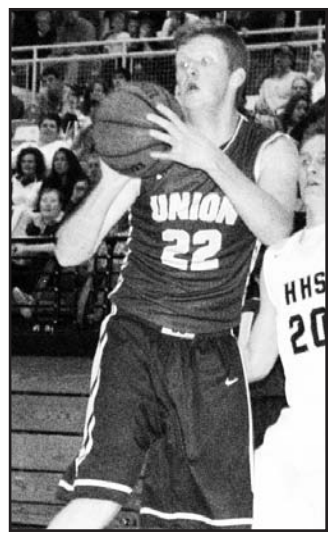
### Panthers 43 Hayesville, NC 58

Hayesville, NC - The Panthers came out red hot and jumped out to leads of 14-6, 16-8, and 18-11 at the end of one, but things quickly went south in the second quarter.

The Yellow Jackets used an 11-3 run to take a 30-27 lead after the Panthers led 24-19 thanks to a Hamby steal-and-score at the 5:54 mark of the half.

At the break, Union was still very much in the game, trailing 30-29.

A 9-2 Yellow Jacket run was capped off by a dunk from another Towns County transfer, Grant Arencibia.



Chase Shook

However, Chase Shook responded with a one-handed slam of his own to keep the Panthers in it at 39-33 with 3:14 left in the period.

The Jackets scored the next five points and opened up their largest lead of the night at 44-33. But a basket by Odom and a trey from Hughes in the final 83 seconds of the third allowed Union to stay within single digits at 47-39.

Odom would do all he could to keep his team in the game with 18 points through three quarters. The Union senior would finish with 20.

Hayesville would clamp down on the Panthers and limit the visitors to four points in the fourth quarter as the Jackets maintained a double-digit lead for the final 6-plus minutes of the game.

Union and Riverside will tip at 6 p.m. on Tuesday. The Panthers defeated the Eagles 64-53 in the first meeting.

On Friday, Rabun County comes calling for a 7 p.m. tip-off for the girls game with the guys to follow. The Wildcats defeated Union 78-70 at Rabun. Finally, Union and Wilkes will tip at 3 p.m. The Panthers won round one 63-46 at home.

SCORING: Odom 20, Hamby 10, Hughes 5, Shook 4, Drake 2, Baenninger 2