

Lady Panthers bounce back from Rabun loss with win over Putnam

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Union County split a pair of games over the weekend against the two teams tied atop the region standings.

After falling at Rabun County on Friday, the Lady Panthers overcame a sluggish first half to hand Putnam County its first region loss.

Now Union County is tied for third with Tuesday's opponent Banks County. With Rabun and Putnam squaring off this week, the Lady Panthers could move into a tie for second with a win over Banks, coupled with a Rabun victory over Putnam.

Lady Panthers 46, Putnam County 36 - Union County handed the Lady War Eagles their first region loss of the season by holding their high-scoring offense to just 11 points in the second half after dropping 70 on Monticello the night before. The Lady Panthers blanketed Putnam County, limiting the visitors to an anemic 14-percent (4-for-29) shooting in the second half and 20-percent for the game (12-for-59).

"We are a very emotional team," Union County head coach Corey Garrett said after Saturday's win. "How we play on one end of the court is going to directly affect how we play on the other end. We came in at halftime after missing nine free throws and turning the ball over 11 times. Then in the second half, we quit turning it over and starting making free throws and it just boiled over to the defensive end and we started getting stops. As I said, we're an emotional team so when it's going good, it's good. But unfortunately, when it's going bad, it's bad."

On Saturday, the Lady War Eagles took control early, imposing their will on Union County over the first 13 minutes of action. Trailing 25-18 with just under 3 minutes left in the second, the Lady Panthers scored the final four points of the half to pull within three, 25-22 at the break.

The first four points of the third quarter belonged to Kait McCarter as the junior gave her team a 26-25 lead. Bad news would strike moments later when McCarter was hit with her fourth foul at the 5:14 mark. Instead of joining him on the bench until the fourth quarter, Coach Garrett and his staff made the risky move to keep her on the floor, showing tremendous trust in the experienced junior.

"I asked Coach (Mandy) Hunter and Coach (Seth) Merritt and we agreed that we shouldn't sit her," Coach Garrett said. "The thing is, she hasn't got to score (this year) like she has in the past but she's such an offensive threat. The opposing coaches might not know that, but we know that, so we felt like she had to play. We tried subbing her out on defense as much as possible and I told her not to do a whole lot on defense. But we were all in agreement that she's got to play. She stepped up huge for us. She didn't score a lot but this might have been her best game."

The decision to keep McCarter on the floor immediately paid dividends on the offensive end as she put the Lady Panthers back on top at 28-27. Andelin Hill followed with a three to give Union County its largest lead of the day at 31-27 with 3:44 left in the third.

Following a Putnam free throw, Ava Hunter scored the Lady Panthers' final five points of the frame to give her squad a 36-30 advantage after three.

Brooke Dockrey hit a pair from the foul line, and following a 0-for-2 trip by Putnam County, Hill gave Union County a 42-30 lead on consecutive baskets.

With 4:58 to play, Hunter sank 1-of-2 at the stripe for a 43-



Left: Freshman Ava Hunter (45) and senior Adeline Dockrey (10) are pulled to the floor during a physical contest at Rabun County on Friday night. Right: Junior Kait McCarter battled foul trouble vs Putnam County on Saturday but still played one of her "best" games according to Union County head coach Corey Garrett. Photos/Todd Forrest



30 advantage but the Lady War Eagles cut the margin to 11 with a basket 27 seconds later.

Hill split a pair of free throws at the 3:37 mark and Putnam made it a 10-point game at 44-34 with 3:30 remaining. They would eventually cut it to 44-36 at the 1:41 mark but Brooke Dockrey put the game away with two free throws, giving Union the 46-36 victory.

Hunter recorded a 14-point, 15-rebound double-double with 4 blocked shots. Hill added 13 points, Brooke Dockrey scored 11 and McCarter had six.

Sophomore Kyla Locklear returned to action after missing the Rabun game and scored 2 points with 6 rebounds, 2 steals and a blocked shot. Adeline Dockrey grabbed 7 boards and dished out 2 assists.

Team stats: Union County connected on 15-for-40 (38-percent) overall, aided by a decent 7-for-17 (41-percent) shooting performance in the second half.

The Lady Panthers were 3-for-10 (30-percent) from deep and 13-for-26 (50-percent) at the charity stripe. Putnam County missed 14-of-16 (13-percent) from 3-point range and hit 10-of-19 (53-percent) at the line.

Once again, Union was out-rebounded 44-38 overall and 20-8 on the offensive glass. However, the Lady War Eagles were unable to capitalize off their advantage on the glass as they were outscored 7-6 on second-chance points.

The Lady Panthers lost the turnover battle 20-15 and trailed 14-11 in points off turnovers.

Lady Panthers 54, Rabun County 70 -- Union County jumped out front 20-11 after one and took a 32-30 lead into the intermission but it was all Rabun County in the second half.

Hunter finished with 19 points, 12 boards and 5 blocked shots but it wasn't enough to keep pace with the Lady Cats, who were led by senior Brooke Hendricks' 20 points.

Hill poured in 18 points with 8 boards, 3 assists, 2 blocks and a steal.

"To be honest with you, I have to give it up to our girls and their girls," Coach Garrett said. "I think we played hard and played well, we just ran out of tools. Rabun simply has more tools on their tool belt right now."

Trailing 7-2 right off the bat, Union County fired back with an 11-0 run to take a 13-7 advantage.

McCarter accounted for 5 points during the run, including a go-ahead three at the 3:58 mark. Rabun would get within two at 13-11 before the Lady Panthers closed the first with seven unanswered, taking a 20-11 lead after 8 minutes of action in Tiger.

Hunter scored 7 points, McCarter had five, Hill and freshman Riley Allison added four each for Union County in

the opening frame.

A Hill free throw kept Union ahead by seven at 21-14 before the Lady Cats used a 7-0 run of its own to even things up at the 5:10 mark. Hill knocked down a pair from the charity stripe and Hunter hit 1-of-2 for a 24-23 Lady Panther lead with 3:50 to play in the second.

Rabun took a brief lead of 25-24 before a Brooke Dockrey trey made it 27-25 in favor of Union. Tied at 27-27, Brooke Dockrey split a pair from the line at the 1:12 mark but a Lady Cat triple put the home team back in charge at 30-28.

The Lady Panthers would close the half with four points in 23 seconds to regain the lead at the break, starting with a Hill putback and ending with a Hunter buzzer-beater in the paint for a 32-30 Union County lead.

Rabun County stepped up its defensive pressure in the second half, forcing a pair of quick turnovers to grab the lead at 34-32 in the opening minute of the third. Hunter got Union on the board at the 5:50 mark to keep the Lady Panthers within a duce at 36-34.

Five straight Lady Cat points were followed by a Hunter free throw that kept Union close at 41-35. Trailing by 10, Brooke Dockrey cut the margin to 45-37, then Hill made it 47-39 and Hunter kept her squad within eight at 49-41 after three.

Hunter would score inside at the 6:50 mark as the Lady Panthers remained eight back at 51-43 before Rabun began to pull away. Free throws by Hill and a short jumper by Hunter made it 57-47; two from the line by Hill kept Union within 11 at 60-49.

Allison sank a pair of free throws at the 2:57 mark but the Lady Panthers still trailed 62-51. Hill concluded the Union County scoring with a three that pulled her team within a dozen at 66-54 as the clock ticked under 1:25.

Brooke Dockrey ended her night with 6 points, 6 assists and a couple of steals. Allison finished with 6 points while McCarter had 5 points and 6 boards. Adeline Dockrey chipped in 2 rebounds, one assist and a steal; Brianna Hemphill picked up a rebound and an assist; Ansley Collins added a rebound and a steal.

Team stats: Union County shot 47-percent from the floor on 18-of-38. They were 33-percent (3-of-9) from downtown and 79-percent (15-for-19) at the line. The Lady Cats were 34-percent (26-for-77) from the floor but pulled down 22 offensive rebounds. Rabun shot 5-of-16 (31-percent) from long distance and 13-for-17 (76 percent) at the line.

The Lady Panthers won the overall rebounding battle 37-35 but Rabun owned the offensive glass 22-8. The turnover difference was also tilted heavily in favor of the Lady Cats and their



Junior Brooke Dockrey leads the team in assists. Photo/Todd Forrest

pressure defense. Union County coughed it up 28 times, resulting in 28 Rabun points. Meanwhile, the Lady Cats turned the ball over eight times, leading to 11 Lady Panther points.

Union County will host Banks County (13-3, 3-2) on Tuesday night in a Region 8-AA clash between a pair of two-loss region squads. The Lady Leopards losses came via nailbiters vs Rabun and Putnam. They fell 61-58 vs Rabun County and 46-

44 at Putnam County.

They own region wins at Monticello (50-41), at Elbert County (43-37) and vs Oglethorpe County (89-13).

"(Banks County) is sort of like us in a way," Coach Garrett said. "They have some big girls inside but they might be a little bit deeper than us at guard. They execute well, they mix up a lot of defenses and they're well-coached. They're just a very good team."

On Friday, Union will visit winless Oglethorpe (0-12, 0-4) who is currently riding a 54-game losing streak, dating back to the 2015-16 season. The Lady Panthers return home on Saturday to host Fannin County in a rematch from Union County's 50-48 victory in Blue Ridge on Nov. 30.

The Lady Rebels are 6-9 overall but 3-2 in Region 7-AAA with wins over struggling East Hall, Battle of the States champion Lumpkin County and first-year program Cherokee Bluff -- who sent shockwaves across North Georgia last week by upsetting Dawson County for the first region victory in team history, holding Lady Tiger star Kaylee Sticker to 6 points in the process.

All three Lady Panther games tip-off at 6 p.m. this week.

Lady Panthers JV 37, Rabun County 59 - Rebekah Chambers scored 15 and Adelia Pyle added nine but it wasn't enough to keep pace with the Lady Cats, who outscored Union 20-4 in the second quarter.

Landry Baenninger and Hemphill scored 3 points each. Emma Roxbury, Allison and Collins scored two apiece while Aubrie Banton had one.

UCMS and UCHS Swimming results: Dec. 15

CLARKSVILLE - Union County Middle School attended its last swim meet of the season on Saturday Dec. 15 at the Ruby Fulbright Aquatic Center in Clarksville.

200 Yard Medley Relay
6th Place: Grayden Cobb, Eli Gwynn, Liam Smith, Daniel Herrera

9th Place: Grace Cook, Lily Helton, Courtney Foster, Anniston Howse (new Middle School Record)

100 Yard Individual Medley
2nd Place: Liam Smith
8th Place: Eli Gwynn
11th Place: Anniston Howse

50 Yard Freestyle
20th Place: Daniel Herrera
10th Place: Grace Cook
22nd Place: Arianna Protsman
26th Place: Olivia Loyd
29th Place: Cheyenne Doche'

100 Yard Freestyle
6th Place: Grayden Cobb
16th Place: Daniel Herrera
6th Place: Lily Helton
7th Place: Courtney Foster

200 Yard Freestyle Relay
5th Place: Grayden Cobb, Daniel Herrera, Daniel Herrera, Liam Smith
8th Place: Lily Helton, Anniston Howse, Grace Cook, Courtney Foster
14th Place: Lilly Collins, Olivia Loyd, Ari Protsman, Cheyenne Doche'

50 Yard Backstroke
5th Place: Grayden Cobb
3rd Place: Courtney Foster
7th Place: Lily Helton

11th Place: Anniston Howse
16th Place: Grace Cook
20th Place: Arianna Protsman
21st Place: Lillian Collins

50 Yard Breaststroke
5th Place: Liam Smith
18th Place: Cheyenne Doche'

ATHENS - Union County High School attended a swim meet on Saturday Dec. 15 at the University of Georgia. The boys relay team continues to drop time, which will improve its seeding at State on February 8-9 at Georgia Tech. Overall, the guys team ranked 8th at the meet, with some of the toughest competition this season.

200 Yard Medley Relay
6th Place: Steven Williams, Brian Williams, Brendan Bowman, Grayson Blocker

200 Yard Individual Medley
3rd Place: Brian Williams (State Time)

50 Yard Freestyle
3rd Place: Brendan Bowman (State Time)
9th Place: Grayson Blocker
6th Place: Kaiya Wilkes

100 Yard Freestyle
6th Place: Brendan Bowman (State Time)

200 Yard Freestyle Relay
3rd Place: Brian Williams, Grayson Blocker, Steven Williams, Brendan Bowman

100 Yard Backstroke
9th Place: Steven Williams

100 Yard Breaststroke
2nd Place: Brian Williams (State Time)

Area Duals Wrestling Tournament this weekend



Union Co. will travel to Monticello on Friday and Saturday for the Area team tournament. Later this month Union will visit Elbert before returning in February for the Traditional Area tourney. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Union County Middle School Swimming team attended its final meet of the season on Dec. 15