

# Sports

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## Panthers improve to 10-10 with Senior Night win over Hayesville

Union County victorious in 2-of-3 last week; will visit North Hall on Tuesday with five region games remaining

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Union County took 2-of-3 on the week, capped off by a Senior Night victory over Hayesville, NC just one day removed from a double-digit loss to Greater Atlanta Christian.

Earlier in the week, the Panthers (10-10 overall, 3-4 in region play) went on the road and picked up a revenge-win at Andrews, NC after suffering their first loss in 10 years to the Wildcats during a game last month.

Union County's non-region schedule is complete and will open the home-stretch of its Region 7-AAA schedule when they visit North Hall on Tuesday and Lumpkin County on Saturday, sandwiched around a Friday night home meeting with East Hall.

The Lumpkin County game is a makeup game from earlier this month when snow forced a cancelation.

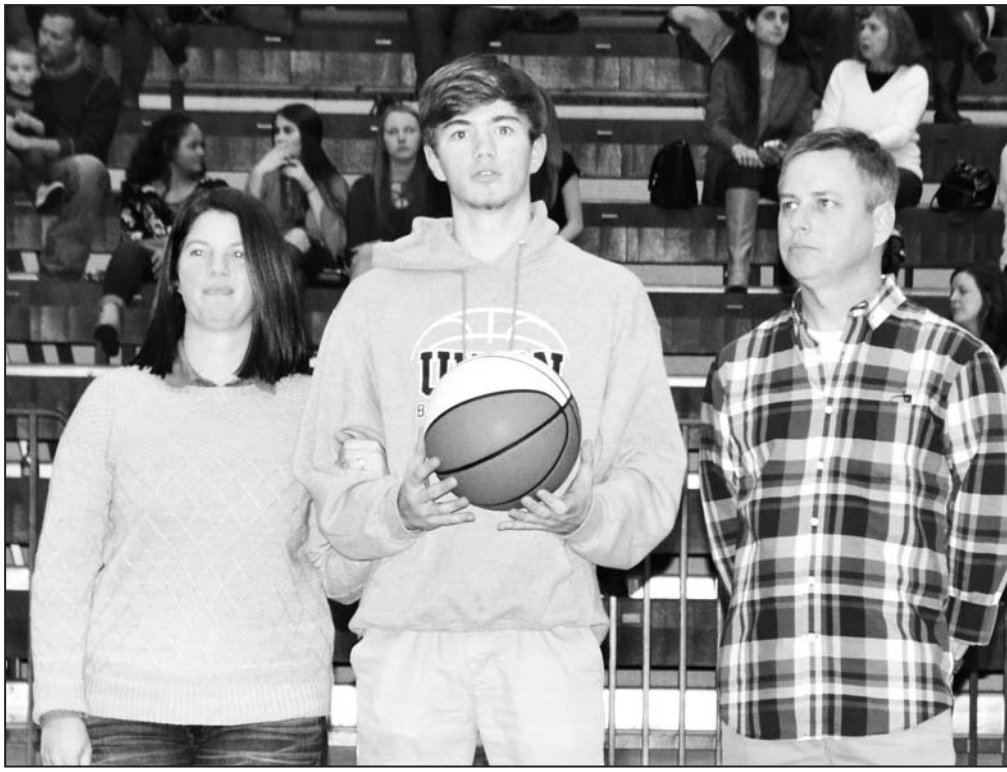
"We have a tough week ahead of us starting with at North Hall on Tuesday," Panthers Head Coach Casey Jones said after the Hayesville, NC win. "Then we have East Hall Friday and at Lumpkin on Saturday so the biggest thing is trying to keep our legs fresh while playing three games a week."

Jones is also confident that leading scorer Lawson Baenninger, who has been out with an ankle injury since the first week of January, will be healthy before the postseason.

"We're hoping that (Baenninger) only has (to miss) one more week," Jones said. "We're hoping for next week (as a return date). It really just depends on this therapy this week. We hope by the end of this week he'll be able to start moving around a little bit."

Tuesday's varsity games at North Hall begin at 6 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. while Friday's home contests with East Hall will tip-off at 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

On Saturday the Panthers visit Lumpkin County where the varsity games get underway at 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.



Senior Lawson Baenninger with family during Saturday's Senior Night ceremony. According to Coach Jones, he could return next week after going down with an ankle injury earlier this month. Photo/Todd Forrest

**Panthers 52, Hayesville, NC 33** – Union used a 10-0 third quarter run to turn a 24-18 half-time advantage into a 36-22 lead heading into the final frame.

Crawford Colwell led the way with 15 points and freshman Pierson Allison poured in 14 but the duo did most of their damage in the second half - combining for 20 points (10 each) after the intermission.

"Our guys knew they were going to have to step up and start scoring (when Baenninger was injured)," Jones said. "Lawson was not only our top scorer, he is a steals man, an assist-man, he gets rebounds, and he's just an all-around good ball player."

"We have missed him, but we've also had some players that have stepped up and fill that void for us."

A Yellow Jacket free throw 27 seconds into the third quarter trimmed the Panthers' lead to 24-19 before Union exploded for 10-unanswered points.

A Crawford Colwell lay-in and two free throws, combined with a free throw by Candler Colwell allowed the Panthers to

open up a 29-19 advantage.

But they weren't done.

Allison drove to the basket for two then followed that up with a trey to put Union on top by 15 with 2:00 left in the third.

A Hayesville three cut the lead to a dozen until Crawford Colwell drove the base line for a lay-up to close the period with his team leading 36-22.

Another 3-ball from Allison opened the fourth with a bang for the home team but the Jackets answered with a 6-0 spurt to pull within 11 at the 5:10 mark. However, Crawford Colwell quickly stretched the margin back to 14 with a 3-point play moments later.

Candler Colwell was perfect at the line with 3:01 remaining and the Panthers led 44-28. Following a Hayesville trey, Allison hit a pair of free throws and Crawford Colwell split a pair at the line for a 47-31 Union advantage with just over a minute left.

Two free throws each by Candler Colwell and sophomore Britt Waller rounded out the scoring for the Panthers over the

game's final minute.

Candler Colwell scored six in the second half after getting shutout in the first half. Meanwhile, juniors Cole Wright, RJ Banton and freshman Sawyer Drake each finished with 4 points. Junior Cole Davis had 3 points and Waller ended up with two.

Rebounding leaders were Banton with 9, Crawford Colwell 8, Allison 5, while Wright had 4 boards to go with team highs in assists (3) and steals (3).

Drake also matched Wright's team-high 3 assists.

Crawford Colwell recorded 2 steals and 2 blocks, Candler Colwell had 2 steals, and Allison dished off a pair of assists.

The first quarter opened with very little defense as both squads exchanged lay-ups over the first five minutes of action. Union would take a 13-12 lead after Banton converted an offensive board into points with 3:28 to play in the period, but both sides went ice cold and wouldn't score again until the second quarter.

Crawford Colwell and



Junior RJ Banton slams on the brakes and draws the foul as a Spartan defender flies over him. Photo/Todd Forrest

Cole Wright opened the second with back-to-back lay-ups then Banton connected from the base line to give the Panthers a 19-12 advantage.

A Jacket trey halted the 7-0 run but Davis responded at the other end with a corner-three for a 22-15 Union lead. Hayesville went to the line on its next two possessions - hitting 3-of-4 to pull within four as the clock approached one minute to play until the break. With 13 seconds left, Wright banked in a pull-up jumper to give his team a 24-18 halftime lead.

One week removed from scoring his 1,000th career point, Hayesville junior Josh Cottrell was held without a basket in the first half and entered the locker room with just two free throws to his name.

However, the Panthers were unable to take advantage of Cottrell's early struggles and missed 6-of-7 free throws over game's first 16 minutes. Enter-

ing the fourth, Cottrell had only 5 points but went on to score six more after Union had built an insurmountable lead.

The win evens the Panthers' record at 10-10 as they continue to play their best ball in the month of January. Since losing at East Hall in the first game of the new year, Union County has won 4-of-5.

"Since starting 3-7 we've gone 7-3 so we've been playing much better," Coach Jones said. "We're happy about how we've improved but we still have two weeks left to try and get better for the (region) tournament."

**Panthers 69, Andrews 46 - Andrews, NC** - Union County got 18 points and 12 boards from Crawford Colwell, 13 points, 9 boards, 4 steals, and 3 assists from Allison, and 12 points from Banton as Coach Jones continues to find players to pick up the slack for the injured

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## Lady Panthers topple Andrews and Hayesville; overmatched by GAC

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The Lady Panthers finished the week with two wins and a loss following one-sided victories over Andrews, NC and Hayesville, NC.

Unfortunately, they took one on the chin Friday when hosting Greater Atlanta Christian.

Five region games remain on the schedule for Head Coach David Tucker and his squad as non-region play is complete.

"Our defense is getting better," Tucker said. "The reason we won two games this week was because of our defense playing hard. And that's all you can ask."

North Hall will play host to Union County (9-11, 1-6) on Tuesday at 6 p.m. after sweeping the varsity contests in Blairsville.

The Lady Panthers and Lady Trojans were locked in a tight, back-and-forth shootout before North Hall was able to gain some separation late in the fourth for a 64-57 win.

Union returns home on Friday but it doesn't get any easier as East Hall comes to town for a 7 p.m. tip-off.

The Lady Vikings stifled the Lady Panthers' offense during a frustrating second half where Union's point total remained in the single digits. As a result, East Hall pulled away, 42-21.

Saturday, Union will finally get a shot at Lumpkin County at 5 p.m. after the previously scheduled game was canceled due to winter weather.

The two teams have yet to meet this season but are currently tied at the bottom of 7-AAA with one win each.

Like the Lady Panthers, Lumpkin split with Fannin County, so defeating Lumpkin is vital if Union wants to avoid a last place finish while a leapfrogging Fannin (two region wins) for fifth place.

Due to snow and rescheduling, the Lady Rebels have a brutal three-game stretch with two games vs GAC and one with first place East Hall.

If the Lady Panthers can sweep Lumpkin County, combined with three Fannin losses, Union will get fifth place and would face Dawson or North Hall in the first round of the region tourney, avoiding GAC



Union County Lady Panthers 2017 basketball seniors: (Top) Ashley Fair with family. (Bottom) Brittany Thornton with family. Photos/Todd Forrest



Union County Lady Panthers 2017 basketball seniors: (Top) Ashley Fair with family. (Bottom) Brittany Thornton with family. Photos/Todd Forrest

or East Hall.

"Going into region, you never know," Tucker said. "If you play hard, anything can happen."

**Lady Panthers 34, Hayesville, NC 18** - Union jumped out to an 18-6 half-time lead while clamping down on the Lady Jackets' offense, limiting them to just 9 points through three quarters.

On top 25-9 entering the fourth, the Lady Panthers shifted into neutral and coasted to the finish line for the 34-18 Senior Night victory.

Junior Bailey Daniel led all scorers with 16 points - nearly outscoring the entire Hayesville

team by herself.

In the first period, Daniel hit a pair of treys to outscore Hayesville 6-0 while her team led 8-0.

At halftime, Daniel had 8 points to the Lady Jackets' six. And through three quarters, Daniel had 12 and Hayesville had nine.

The fourth quarter opened with a free throw by freshman Brooke Dockrey, then a Lady Jacket trey was followed by a basket from senior Ashley Fair and two Daniel free throws to open up Union's largest lead at 30-12 with 5:59 to play.

Hayesville scored the next

six points but the Lady Panthers finally slammed the door by shutting out visitors over the final three minutes.

Brooke Dockrey added 7 points for Union, Kait McCarter had five, Fair scored four while snagging 5 boards, and Jordan Rogers finished with 2 points.

Sophomore Adeline Dockrey hauled in 5 boards with 2 steals, junior Grace Wischmeyer finished with 2 steals, and junior Maggie Beth Stuart blocked a shot.



Sophomore Jordan Rogers battles for a loose ball vs GAC. Photo/Todd Forrest



Freshman Brooke Dockrey drives the lane vs GAC. Photo/Todd Forrest

**draws 45 - Andrews, NC** - Daniel set a career-high with six 3-pointers while pouring in 24 points and 5 rebounds during a 55-45 Lady Panthers road victory.

Behind four early treys by Daniel, Union jumped out to a 19-10 lead after one and entered the break up 10 at 33-23.

They continued to pull away in the third and took a 12-point advantage into the fourth.

Brooke Dockrey turned in another solid performance with 9 points, 4 assists, and 3 steals.

Grace Wischmeyer and Rogers scored 6 points each,

while Adeline Dockrey finished with 5 points, and a team high 7 rebounds.

McCarter and fellow freshman Andelin Hill scored two each and Fair chipped in a free throw, 6 boards, 3 assists, and 2 steals.

**Lady Panthers 40, GAC 67** - After losing 77-27 to the Lady Spartans in Norcross, Union refused to back down in the rematch and became just the second team in 7-AAA to score 40 on the mighty Gwinnett County private school.

Trailing 24-11 after one...

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