

# Sports

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## Baseball: Panthers rally past Gilmer on Kelley's walk-off

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With two down and the bases loaded, junior Hunter Kelley sent a 3-1 pitch deep into centerfield, scoring two and giving the Panthers a dramatic walk-off victory over Gilmer - capping off a three-run, seventh-inning rally.

Leading 2-1 through five, Union right-hander RJ Banton was the victim of two fielding errors in the sixth, allowing the Bobcats to load the bases, en route to a three-run inning.

The Panthers (2-1) stranded two in their half of the sixth and entered the seventh trailing 4-2. Banton would work around a leadoff single in the top-half of the inning to keep Union within two runs heading into its final at-bat.

Pierson Allison drew a leadoff walk and Ean Harkins singled to left - putting runners at the corners with two down. Banton then battled his way aboard with a nine-pitch walk to load the bases.

Union County head coach Robbie Roxbury turned to pinch-hitter Del Ruff, who recorded an RBI the hard way when he was plunked upstairs by the second pitch he saw.

Kelley then stepped to the plate and watched strike one before taking three strike balls to set up a favorable hitter's count. With nowhere to put him, Kelley was sitting on the fastball and they gave him one belt-high.

With the outfield playing shallow to cut down the potential winning run at the plate, Kelley lifted the pitch high and deep into the outfield. And once the ball dropped beyond the reach of the Bobcat centerfielder, the celebration could ensue. As soon as Harkins and Banton crossed home plate, Kelley was swarmed by his teammates at second base.

Kelley finished 1-for-4 at the plate with 2 RBIs. Meanwhile, senior Candler Colwell drove in a pair with a two-out, go-ahead double of his own.



L-R: Junior Hunter Kelley knows immediately that he's made solid contact on his game-winning double vs Gilmer. Panther teammates swarm Kelley at second base following his walk-off double that capped a three-run rally in the seventh inning. Photos/Todd Forrest

Trailing 1-0 in the fourth, Colwell gave Union County its first lead of the game when he scored Banton and Alec Scott with an opposite-field double.

Banton opened the inning with an infield single and Ruff was hit by another 1-0 pitch, bringing Scott in as a pinch runner. With one out, senior Logan Dyer advanced the runners with a sacrifice bunt - setting the table for Colwell.

Colwell, like Kelley, only finished with one hit but he made it count - a two-run, two-out, go-ahead double.

Gilmer led for most of the game after a lead-off double in the first spotted the visitors an early 1-0 lead.

The Panthers stranded two runners in their half of the first after Patrick Baggett singled and Ruff was (you guessed it) hit by a 1-0 pitch.

Cole Davis got the start for Union County and allowed one earned run in four innings. The senior lefty scattered three hits while fanning two and walking two.

Banton worked the final three innings, giving up three

hits and three unearned runs while walking two and striking out one.

Baggett had the only multi-hit game for the Panthers - finishing 2-for-4.

Harkins went 1-for-2 with a run and Banton was 1-for-2 with two runs.

The Panthers hosted Rabun County on Monday before traveling to White County for a Friday doubleheader beginning at 4 p.m.

Union County will visit Murphy, NC on Monday, Feb. 5 at 4 p.m.



Senior left-hander Cole Davis got the start vs Gilmer and worked four innings, allowing one run and striking out two. Photo/Todd Forrest

### Union County

Lineup	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Ean Harkins	2	1	1	0	0	0
Patrick Baggett	4	0	2	0	0	1
RJ Banton	2	2	1	0	2	0
Del Ruff	0	0	0	1	0	0
Alec Scott	0	1	0	0	0	0
Chayton Schafer	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hunter Kelley	4	0	1	2	0	1
Logan Dyer	1	0	0	0	0	0
Candler Colwell	3	0	1	2	0	0
Coleson Daniel	2	0	0	0	0	2
Pierson Allison	0	1	0	0	1	0
Cole Davis	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cayden Rich	2	0	0	0	0	1
Jonathan Everett	2	0	0	0	0	2
Chayton Schafer	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>

### Batting

2B: Candler Colwell, Hunter Kelley  
TB: Patrick Baggett 2, RJ Banton, Candler Colwell 2, Ean Harkins, Hunter Kelley 2  
RBI: Candler Colwell 2, Hunter Kelley 2, Del Ruff  
SAC: Logan Dyer  
FC: Candler Colwell, Hunter Kelley, Chayton Schafer  
HBP: Logan Dyer, Del Ruff 3  
SB: Chayton Schafer  
CS: Patrick Baggett

### Union County

Pitching	IP	#P	S%	H	R	ER	SO	BB	HR
Cole Davis	4.0	54	.593	3	1	1	2	2	0
RJ Banton	3.0	53	.566	3	3	0	1	2	0
Cayden Rich	0.0	0	.000	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>.579</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>

### Pitching

Pitches-Strikes: RJ Banton 53-30, Cole Davis 54-32, Cayden Rich 0-0  
Groundouts-Flyouts: RJ Banton 3-4, Cole Davis 5-3, Cayden Rich 0-0  
First-pitch strikes-Batters faced: RJ Banton 10-16, Cole Davis 11-16, Cayden Rich 0-0

## Lady Panthers improve to 3-0 with shutout wins vs Rabun, Rabun Gap

Junior forward Madison Yost caps off impressive week with 8 goals and 3 assists in two blowout victories

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The Union County Lady Panthers (3-0) dismantled Rabun County and Rabun Gap last week in a pair of tune-up games prior to Region 7-AAA action getting underway this week.

On Tuesday, Madison Yost led the Lady Panthers with 5 goals and two assists during a 9-0 blowout of Rabun County.

Less than 15 minutes into the contest, Yost already had a hat trick, scoring goals in the second, 14th, and 15th minutes of the game.

During the 25th minute, Yost fed Mattison Ruff for a goal and a 4-0 Union County lead.

Two minutes into the second half, Yost scored her fourth goal off a feed from Ashlyn Hall. Exactly 102 seconds later, Layne Baenninger got in on the action with a goal of her own. Baenninger also assisted Yost on the first goal of the evening.

Freshman Isabella Nottage scored two goals sandwiched around Yost's fifth goal of the game with 18:34 remaining.

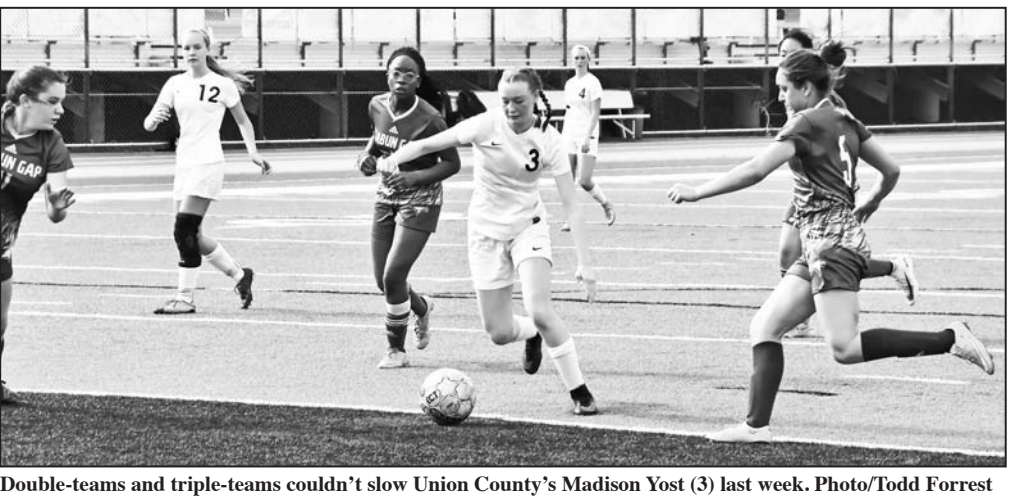
The two Nottage goals came with 33:00 and 5:09 left in the game - the first via a Yost assist. Brenna Innis also added an assist on Yost's second goal of the game.

On Saturday, Innis scored her first goal of the season as the Lady Panthers throttled Rabun Gap, 7-0 behind Yost's second straight hat trick.

Two first-half goals from Yost along with goals from Maddie Sutton and Innis spotted Union County a 4-0 advantage at the intermission.

With starting goalkeeper Emmi Schakat visiting West Point, head coach Tim Hunter turned to keeper Sadie Underwood to deliver his team's third consecutive shutout.

"Sadie Underwood stepped in for Emmi and did a great job for us," Hunter said following the Rabun Gap win.



Double-teams and triple-teams couldn't slow Union County's Madison Yost (3) last week. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Lady Panthers during the playing of the national anthem on Saturday. Photo/Todd Forrest

"Also, Sophia Romano has filled in nicely for us at sweeper this year and I can't say enough good things about the play of Brenna Innis."

Offensively, it took Union County until the midway point of the second half to regain its early momentum. With 23:27 to play, Baenninger scored on a Sutton throw-in for a 5-0 advantage.

Approximately 110 seconds later, Yost recorded the hat trick with a goal at the 21:37 mark off a Nottage assist. Finally, with 8:47 remaining, Baenninger blasted a kick past the Lady Eagles keeper for her second goal of the day.

Nottage and Sutton each finished with two assists while Yost and Ruff had one apiece.

Normally (Rabun Gap) is a very tough, 2-0 or 2-1 type of outing, but our girls have been playing exceptionally well, top to bottom," Hunter said. "We're

moving the ball well at midfield and just doing a surprising amount of good things.

"One of the things I'm proudest of is how well we're possessing the ball. We don't have the depth that we've had in the past so some of these girls are having to play 80 minutes, or close to it, and are really doing a good job."

The Lady Panthers must continue to play well if they want to improve to 4-0. On Tuesday, Union County opens region play at sixth-ranked Dawson County, who is currently 3-1 after suffering a 5-0 loss to Class AAAAA's third-ranked team, Flowery Branch (6-0).

Last year, Dawson County throttled the Lady Panthers 10-1 on Senior Night before falling 2-0 to Lovett in the opening round of state.

"(Dawson) is still one of the elite teams in our region due

to having so many club players," Hunter said. "Then we host East Hall on Friday, who we've had a little bit of success against, but Dawson County an extraordinarily tough matchup."

Last year, Union County defeated East Hall 6-1 as the Lady Vikings went on to finish 0-6 in Region 7-AAA and 2-15 overall.

This season, East Hall is 0-3-2 with a 1-1 tie vs Gilmer and a 2-2 tie vs Meadowcreek.

The three losses were each one-sided affairs beginning with a 10-0 rout at the hands of Chestatee. Three days later they fell 5-0 at Stephens County before going down 6-1 at Darlington last Friday.

The action gets underway at 5 p.m. Tuesday in Dawsonville with the guys in follow. East Hall at Union will also kickoff at 5 p.m. on Friday.



Maddie Sutton gives Union a 2-0 lead vs Rabun Gap. Photo/Todd Forrest



Layne Baenninger looks for run vs Rabun County. Photo/Todd Forrest

## JV Girls: Rabun Gap scores late in 3-2 victory over Union County



Union County's JV girls fell 3-2 to Rabun Gap despite goals from Courtney Rollins and Trinity Queen. Photo/Todd Forrest