

Sports

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Panthers pound White County, run winning streak to nine

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@ngame.com

YOUNG HARRIS - In case you missed it, Union County baseball extended its winning streak to nine games during spring break with a 10-3 win over Class AAAA White County at Young Harris College's Zell B. Miller Field.

With the remainder of Region 8-AA also taking on a non-region slate of games last week, the standings saw no movement as the Panthers (10-8, 6-4) remain in fourth place - two games back of first and one game up on fifth.

According to Union County Head Baseball Coach Zach Odom, it took some time for his team to return to form and snap out of spring break-mode when it was time to resume practice.

"We took a few days off before coming back and we looked very sluggish that first day so we had a little talk after practice," Coach Odom said following the win over White County. "The next day they looked like themselves again and I liked what I saw from them today, as well."

Panthers 10, White County 3 - In the only Union County High School sporting event of the week, the Panthers hosted the Warriors at YHC on Thursday, April 4 and used six unanswered runs to blow open a 4-3 advantage after four innings.

Five of Union's seven hits went for extra bases as four different pitchers saw action during the 10th win of the season.

Cayden Rich finished 2-for-3 with three RBIs, a double and a triple while Alec Scott scored four times and tripled during a 2-for-3 day at the plate.

Rich also worked a perfect seventh inning to seal the win after starter Ean Harkins tossed two scoreless innings.

Austin Garrison allowed three runs -- two earned -- and five hits while on the mound in the third and fourth innings. Zeke Swartz surrendered two hits and walk but managed to keep



L-R: Cayden Rich (11) and Isaak Mullanack (9) are all smiles during Union's four-run fifth. Senior left-hander Ean Harkins got the start and threw two scoreless innings. Photos/Todd Forrest



the Warriors off the board in the fifth and sixth.

Swartz also helped spark the Panther bats in the first inning when his one-out double put runners at second and third. Scott, who reached on an error, and Swartz both came around to score on passed balls to spot Union County a 2-0 lead after one.

White County answered by loading the bases off of Harkins in the second but the senior southpaw escaped the jam with a strikeout and a ground out to retire the side. They would eventually get on the board in the third inning, however, when back-to-back two-out singles cut the Panther lead in half at 2-1.

Union County responded with two runs in the bottom half of the inning when Scott opened with a leadoff triple. A one-out, RBI triple by Rich made it a 3-1 game before he scored on a ground ball to second off the bat of Garrison.

The Warriors took advantage of a leadoff walk and a two-out error to pull within a run at 4-3 in the fourth. The Panthers would go down in order in the bottom of the fourth as Swartz replaced Garrison on the hill to start the fifth.

The Union County ace ran into immediate trouble when White County put runners at second and third with

one down before Swartz induced a pop-up to first and a bouncer back to the mound to preserve the one-run lead.

The bottom of the fifth saw the Panthers open up a five-run advantage with a four-run inning that was sparked by a leadoff double from Isaak Mullanack. A no-out, bases-loaded walk by Rich produced the first run of the inning, then Scott scored on a wild pitch for a 6-3 Union margin. A Garrison ground out and a fielding error off the bat of Alec Youngblood resulted in two more Panther runs for an 8-3 score. Union was unable to do any more damage after a Warrior pitching change led to a ground out and strikeout to end the inning.

But with a five-run cushion getting handed to a pitcher who's only allowed four earned runs all season, the Union lead was in very good hands.

After a rocky fifth and a leadoff single to open the sixth, Swartz settled down and retired the next three Warriors in-order to protect the five-run advantage.

A base hit by Scott and a walk to Swartz set the table for Rich, who brought them both around with a double. Leading 10-3 after six, Rich took the ball from Swartz and retired White County 1-2-3 to put the finishing touches on

Union longest winning streak of the 2000s.

"They've worked hard and they deserve it," Odom said regarding the streak. "They're staying consistent through the ups and downs. Every baseball team goes through a stretch of a few bad innings but these guys keep on fighting. They are never satisfied and they're constantly working to get better."

Up next: The Panthers were scheduled to visit Lumpkin County on Monday but the county was rained out. As a result, Wednesday's home contest with Lumpkin is now a doubleheader with a 5 p.m. first pitch.

The Indians have been a Jekyll-and-Hyde team of sorts this season. At home, Lumpkin County is an impressive 8-3 but have struggled at 2-7 in true road games (they are 1-1 in neutral site contests).

Region play resumes when the Panthers visit Oglethorpe County on Friday for a day-night doubleheader beginning at 5 p.m.

The Patriots are currently 2-8 in region play and 6-15 overall. At four games back of fourth with four region games to play, Oglethorpe isn't mathematically eliminated from playoff contention (yet) but it would take nothing short of a miracle to overtake fourth

place Union, fifth place Rabun County and Monticello - who is currently tied with the Patriots for sixth.

Region breakdown: As for Rabun, they remain one game back of Union at 5-5 in region and 6-16 overall. The Wildcats finally scored their first non-region victory last week when they split a twin bill with West Hall on the heels of a loss at Franklin, North Carolina.

This Friday, they will travel to Monticello for a doubleheader before the region finale at Union County on April 19.

Meanwhile, the three-way tie atop Region 8-AA is about to get interesting when Elbert County visits Social Circle on Friday. The third team in the mix, Banks County, visits Putnam County this week in what should be an easy sweep for the Leopards. However, Elbert County will pay a visit to Banks County in next week's Region 8-AA finale while Social Circle closes with Putnam.

Big picture: The results of next week's Elbert at Social Circle matchup could help and hurt the Panthers, depending on how the final standings shake down.

Should Social Circle sweep the Blue Devils and Union take care of business

at Oglethorpe, the Panthers would move into third place based on holding the tie-breaker over Elbert.

On the other hand, one of the tiebreakers is wins vs higher seeded region teams. Simply put, should Union and Rabun split their doubleheader and still end up tied, the Panthers will need Elbert to finish ahead of Social Circle in the standings.

Rabun currently owns a victory over Social Circle and in the event of a Union-Rabun tie, that win over Social could potentially move the Wildcats ahead of the Panthers, should Social finish ahead of Elbert County.

In a nutshell, a Social Circle sweep of Elbert offers a greater risk/reward opportunity for Union.

An Elbert sweep, would be the safe play for the Panthers' playoff chances but it could limit their upward mobility.

A split would benefit Banks County by leaving the Leopards all alone at the top. As for Union, nothing would change in the standings with the exception of a potentially tighter race between second and fifth places - depending on the Union at Oglethorpe and Rabun at Monticello results, of course.

Lineup	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Isaak Mullanack	4	1	1	0	0	0
Alec Scott	3	4	2	0	1	0
Zeke Swartz	3	3	1	0	1	0
Cayden Rich	3	2	2	3	1	0
Austin Garrison	3	0	1	2	0	0
Alec Youngblood	4	0	0	1	0	1
Coleson Daniel	3	0	0	0	0	0
Jonathan Everett	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hunter Kelley	2	0	0	0	0	0
Payton Ivester	3	0	0	0	0	1
JJ Littles	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ean Harkins	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	29	10	7	6	3	2

Batting
2B: Zeke Swartz, Isaak Mullanack, Cayden Rich
3B: Cayden Rich, Alec Scott
TB: Zeke Swartz 2, Austin Garrison, Isaak Mullanack 2, Cayden Rich 5, Alec Scott 4
RBI: Austin Garrison 2, Cayden Rich 3, Alec Youngblood
ROE: Coleson Daniel, Payton Ivester, Alec Scott, Alec Youngblood
FC: Zeke Swartz, Austin Garrison 2, Hunter Kelley, Alec Youngblood
HBP: Austin Garrison
GIDP: Alec Youngblood
SB: Payton Ivester

Pitching	IP	#P	S%	H	R	ER	SO	BB	HR
Ean Harkins	2.0	30	.567	2	0	0	2	1	0
Austin Garrison	2.0	51	.588	5	3	2	2	1	0
Zeke Swartz	2.0	40	.625	2	0	0	1	1	0
Cayden Rich	1.0	10	.500	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	7.0	131	.588	9	3	2	5	3	0

Pitching
HBP: Ean Harkins
WP: Zeke Swartz, Ean Harkins
Pitches-Strikes: Zeke Swartz 40-25, Austin Garrison 51-30, Ean Harkins 30-17, Cayden Rich 10-5
Groundouts-Flyouts: Zeke Swartz 0-2, Austin Garrison 0-2, Ean Harkins 0-2, Cayden Rich 3-0
First pitch strikes-Batters faced: Zeke Swartz 8-9, Austin Garrison 4-13, Ean Harkins 5-10, Cayden Rich 1-3

#	Roster	GP	PA	AB	H	1B	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	HBP	ROE	FC	CI	BB	SO	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
44	Damien Chitwood	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1.000	1.000	1.000	2.000
9	Isaak Mullanack	17	71	53	22	19	3	0	0	7	19	2	3	2	0	15	5	.415	.549	.472	1.021
22	Zeke Swartz	17	63	53	22	21	1	0	0	13	11	3	2	5	0	6	5	.415	.492	.434	.926
1	John Mancuso	6	18	15	6	6	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	1	0	2	3	.400	.471	.400	.871
6	Alec Scott	18	73	63	22	15	5	2	0	12	18	0	4	3	0	8	14	.349	.411	.492	.903
11	Cayden Rich	16	54	46	16	11	3	1	1	13	11	2	2	4	0	5	12	.348	.426	.522	.948
18	Hunter Kelley	16	58	41	11	9	2	0	0	9	6	7	4	5	0	9	9	.268	.466	.317	.783
30	Austin Garrison	17	60	54	13	13	0	0	0	9	9	2	8	10	0	3	6	.241	.300	.241	.541
12	Coleson Daniel	14	42	38	7	7	0	0	0	4	5	0	3	5	0	4	12	.184	.262	.184	.446
27	Alec Youngblood	16	58	50	8	8	0	0	0	3	2	1	1	7	0	6	12	.160	.259	.160	.419
16	Jonathan Everett	13	42	35	5	4	1	0	0	6	3	1	3	3	0	5	11	.143	.268	.171	.440
31	Payton Ivester	9	15	11	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	3	5	.091	.333	.091	.424
5	Mason McCombs	6	13	12	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	4	.083	.154	.083	.237
24	Ean Harkins	12	35	32	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	16	.063	.114	.063	.177
19	JJ Littles	6	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	.000	.000	.000	.000
4	Jonah Daniel	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	.000	.000
15	Matthew Kelley	5	9	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	.000	.111	.000	.111
Totals	18	615	513	137	118	15	3	1	82	96	20	33	47	0	70	121	.267	.370	.314	.684	

#	Roster	IP	GP	GS	W	L	SV	SVO	BS	SV%	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HBP	ERA	WHIP
22	Zeke Swartz	44.0	8	7	3	1	0	0	0	.000	28	7	4	6	58	2	.636	.773
9	Isaak Mullanack	32.1	7	6	1	1	0	0	0	.000	41	29	18	13	28	8	3.897	1.670
24	Ean Harkins	15.2	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	.000	12	9	6	10	17	2	2.681	1.404
30	Austin Garrison	13.2	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	.000	16	10	5	7	15	0	2.561	1.683
12	Coleson Daniel	7.0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	8	9	4	6	4	3	4.000	2.000
11	Cayden Rich	5.2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	2	0	0	4	8	0	.000	1.059
3	Kaston Hemphill	5.0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	.000	3	2	2	2	4	2	2.800	1.000
19	JJ Littles	2.0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	2	1	0	0	1	0	.000	1.000
Totals	125.1	18	18	5	2	0	0	0	0	.000	112	68	39	48	135	17	2.178	1.277