

Sports

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Volleyball: Union matches longest win streak in two years

By Todd Forrest
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Union County improved to 4-1 on the year with four wins last week, beginning with home victories vs. Rabun County and Stephens County on Tuesday, Aug. 13, followed by wins over Commerce and Franklin County on Thursday night in Carnesville -- the program's first four-game winning streak since August 2022.

The Panthers opened the week by knocking off Stephens County 2-0 (25-21, 25-21) behind seven kills from Lily Brookshire and Reese Jones' six aces.

Mallory Rouse had 5 kills, Katelyn Brown added 4 kills, Jones recorded three, Mady Adams had two, Charlei Robinson and Sofia Foster had one kill apiece.

Freshman Samantha Combs chipped in 3 aces; Brown had two; Robinson and Rouse collected one each.

Foster led the way with 2 blocks, Brown and Adams finished with one apiece. Jones had a team-high 8 assists, Brown had six and Robinson finished with five. Jones added 13 digs; Brown had 10.

In last Tuesday's nightcap vs. Rabun County, the Panthers picked up another 2-0 win (25-21, 25-21), rallying for a 13-6 deficit in the opener before erasing a 16-7 margin in the finale.

Brookshire, Foster and Jones sparked the set-one rally, allowing Rouse's ace to even the score at 13-13. With Union trailing 16-15 moments later, Jones' ace, along with kills by Brown and Adams, opened up an 18-16 edge.

Brookshire and Brown kept the Panthers out front 22-20, and then Rouse's kill made it 24-21, setting up Brown's ace for the win.

Foster ignited Union's surge in set two ahead of two Jones kills and two aces by Brown. Rouse moved Union within three at 16-13, followed by another Brown ace.

With their team down 18-16, Brookshire's kill and Robinson's ace knotted the score for the first time since 3-3. Trailing 20-19 later in the set,



Junior Reese Jones currently leads the team in kills, assists, aces and is third in digs. Photo/Todd Forrest

Union County raced in front for good behind a Brookshire kill and two aces by Jones.

Ahead 23-21, kills from Brown and Brookshire finished off the second set and secured the Panthers 25-21 victory.

Brookshire and Jones ended with 6 kills each; Rouse had five; Brown added four; Adams and Emmy Kight had one kill each. Adams finished with one block.

Brown's 4 aces and 10 assists led the way for Union in both categories; Jones had 3 aces and 9 assists; Rouse chipped in 2 aces; Robinson added an ace, 3 assists and 9 digs.

On Thursday, Union visited Franklin County to face the Lions and Commerce, leaving with two more victories and a 4-game winning streak.

The Panthers handled Franklin County (25-17, 25-15) courtesy of Jones' team-high

5 kills. Mallory Rouse converted 4 aces; Foster had 2 blocks; Brookshire recorded 6 digs and Brown added 6 assists.

Rouse had 4 kills; Brown had 3 kills; Brookshire finished with two; Adams and Foster chipped in one kill apiece.

Brown picked up 2 aces; Robinson, Brookshire and Payton Murphy had one each. Brown had one block.

Later, Union County defeated Commerce 2-0 (25-23, 25-15). No stats were available from the win.

Union County played host to Andrews, NC on Monday, Aug. 19. The Panthers visit Stephens County on Tuesday, Aug. 20 to face the Indians and Tallulah Falls. Union travels to Dawson County on Thursday to play the Tigers and West Hall.

The Panthers will open Region 7-AA action on Sept. 10 vs. Rockmart.



Senior Katelyn Brown (10) serves during the first set of Union County's 2-0 home victory over Rabun County on Tuesday, Aug. 13. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union County celebrates its win over Rabun County. Photo/Todd Forrest

Anderson becomes youngest winner in Outlaws Dirt Racing Series history

North Georgia News
Sports Special

Chatsworth - History was made on Saturday night, Aug. 3, during the Topless Outlaws Dirt Racing Series event at North Georgia Speedway.

Tucker Anderson, a 17-year-old from Blairsville, made history by becoming the youngest winner in the history of the Topless Outlaws Dirt Racing Series.

Anderson was the class of the field throughout the program at the third-mile dirt oval. He started the day by going fast time overall with a 14.501-second lap.

When the 40-lap feature began it was Anderson in his No. 22 Longhorn Chassis who led the field to the green flag.

He was never seriously challenged during the event, which was slowed by three caution periods.

He ultimately finished more than four seconds clear of second to secure his first series win to go along with two Limited Late Model wins at Sugar Creek Raceway and five

604 Late Model wins at Sugar Creek, East Bay Raceway Park, Talladega Short Tack and North Georgia this year.

"What an incredible night," Anderson said. "I have to start by thanking my Papaw and Nana, Coltman Farms Racing, Tonya with MPM Marketing and Jamie and Heath at the shop. None of this would be possible without them."

"I was told in the shop last week that if I didn't win this race, it would be because of me. The car was so good. I could go anywhere I needed to go with it. I just had to point it and it went. The car was perfect. I couldn't have asked for a better race car."

Anderson would also like to thank Longhorn Chassis, Vic Hill Racing Engines, Vinson Sims Construction and Beaver Dam Trucking for their continued support.

Anderson took the checkered flag ahead of the second-place No. 38 car of Jamie Oliver; third-place Jordan Rodabaugh (No. 66); fourth-place Austin Kelley (No. 3) and fifth-place Colten Jackson (No. J4).



Blairsville's Tucker Anderson following his win during the Topless Outlaws Dirt Racing series earlier this month. Photo/Nathan Curtis

Football: Panthers to start first freshman QB since 2006 on Friday

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Union County will likely start a freshman under center for the first time in 18 years (Kolt Owenby) when the Panthers visit Gilmer (0-1) in Friday's 2024 season opener.

Freshman Kamden Kendrick expects to get the nod this week after junior quarterback Cade Dockrey suffered a season-ending ACL tear during the second quarter of Union County's scrimmage vs. Chestatee. He is scheduled for surgery later this month.

"Kendrick is the starter as of this week, but we have Maddox [Young] ready to go if we need him," Union County head coach Michael Perry said. "Maddox is a really good receiver, so that's why I want to leave him at receiver unless we have to play him at quarterback."

"Obviously, it's not easy for Kamden [taking over at QB], but he's decisive and he gets rid of the football, and that's what he has to continue to do. He's a tough kid and I know he's up to the challenge. We're going to try and do everything we can from a coaching standpoint to make it a nice, smooth transition and put him in a position to succeed."

The loss of Dockrey also opens up a spot at punter - a position that remains up in the air as of Monday.

In some positive injury news, senior linebacker Ethan Lester is cleared for this week's season opener after the original timetable had the team's leading tackler in 2023 slated for return in week two.



Union County freshman Kamden Kendrick enters the first week of 2024 as the Panthers' starting quarterback following Cade Dockrey's knee injury. Photo/Todd Forrest

Regarding his post-scrimmage concerns at outside linebacker, Coach Perry believes the return of Lester will bolster the group, allowing Kaden Combs and Lester to man the middle with senior Braden Plott and freshman Micah Wallace to take over the outside linebacker spots.

"[Combs] will be the only guy playing both ways," Perry said. "The other night [in the scrimmage], we had our best guys playing both

ways and it really limited us offensively, but it didn't make a huge difference on defense. But Ethan Lester is back and that will help us out a lot on defense - he and [Combs] make a pretty good duo in the inside."

The return of Lester has indirectly secured another area of concern: Running back depth.

"It's helped that Bentley [Rich] is now strictly playing offense," Perry said. "He had a good week in practice

last week and he was one of the ones originally playing both ways. Now he gets all of his reps at running back, which makes him a much better player offensively."

Perry continued to sing the praises of sophomore Kevin Kilpatrick and Union's revamped secondary.

"I feel really good about our secondary - Kilpatrick has made a big difference for us back there," he said. "Daniel [McPee] and Darin Patterson



Union County head coach Michael Perry is handing the keys to freshman Kamden Kendrick to open the 2024 season. Photo/Todd Forrest

are very good football players. We just have to continue getting better on the defensive line. That's our biggest thing right now."

Ironing out the defensive wrinkles is a must before facing a run-heavy Gilmer squad, that enters Friday night with a chip on its shoulder following its 42-28 loss to rival Fannin County on Friday night.

"We know Gilmer will be coached very well," Perry said. "I guarantee you they will

have some nasty practices this week after losing to Fannin, and they're going to unleash all their anger on us. We have to be ready for that."

"But we're excited for another season under the lights and hope the community makes the trip down to Ellijay to support our guys after all the hard work they've put in during the spring and summer."

Kickoff is at 7:30 p.m. Friday night at Gilmer High School in Ellijay.

Softball: Anthros, Dyer lead Union in shutout win at Lumpkin

Lady Panthers fall to Rockmart, Lanier and White County

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Union County (4-7, 0-1) dropped three of four for the second straight week, including a 6-0 loss at Rockmart in its Region 7-AA opener on Thursday, Aug. 15.

The Lady Panthers' lone victory came Saturday morning during a 7-0 win at Lumpkin County. Later in the day, Union suffered a 5-2 loss to Lanier in Dahlonega. On Monday, Aug. 12, the Lady Panthers dropped a 4-2 contest at White County.

Lady Panthers 7, Lumpkin County 0 - Sophomore Izzy Anthros logged her first shutout of 2024 and senior Sloane Dyer drove in 5 runs during a 3-for-4 day at the plate.

Union scored two in the first when freshman Addison Whitener reached via a one-out error, Jordane Mullanack doubled and Dyer's 2-run single emptied the bases.

The Lady Panthers doubled their lead when Whitener singled and scored during Union's two-run third, Mullanack reached on an error and Dyer's base hit up the middle brought home Whitener. Jaslyn Roberts' squeeze bunt plated Mullanack, building a 4-0 advantage.

Anthros escaped a two-out, two-on jam during the Lumpkin fourth, and Union County broke things open with three in the fifth.

Anthros reached on an error to lead off the frame, and Mullanack's one-out single put runners at the corners for Dyer, who belted a two-run double to left.

Dyer came around to score later in the inning courtesy of a Lumpkin County error.

Anthros locked down the win, allowing only one hit over the final three frames. The sophomore struck out 12 Indians in the complete-game victory, allowing 4 hits and walking two.

Mullanack finished 3 for 4 with 3 runs at the dish; Delaney Moses went 1 for 3; Whitener went 1 for 4 with a pair of runs; Peyton Grisham drew a walk.

Lady Panthers 0, Rockmart 6 - Whitener's seventh-inning single was all the offense Union County could manufacture during its Region 7-AA debut.

Anthros matched the Lady Jackets through four, limiting the home team to one hit until the floodgates opened the fifth.

Locked in a scoreless tie in the Rockmart fifth, Anthros allowed a lead-off triple and an RBI single. Still, Anthros and the Lady Panthers nearly limited the damage to a lone run, but four consecutive two-out hits dropped Union into a



Union County sophomore pitcher Izzy Anthros leaves the field after securing the final out of her 132-pitch complete game shutout on a hot, humid day in Dahlonega. Photo/Todd Forrest

5-0 deficit.

Rockmart added an insurance run in the sixth off Whitener.

Anthros went 4 2/3, allowing 6 hits and 5 earned runs. Whitener worked the final 1 2/3, giving up one hit, a walk and a run.

Lady Panthers 2, White County 4 - Union County couldn't climb out of an early 4-0 hole on Monday evening in Cleveland.

Anthros suffered the tough luck loss despite surrendering only three hits and one earned over 6 innings while being the victim of three Lady Panther errors.

A first-inning error allowed White County to grab an early 1-0 advantage, and then a hit batter, a single and an error helped the Warriors build a 3-0 lead during the fourth.

Back-to-back two-out doubles grew the White County lead to 4-0 in the sixth.

Grisham opened Union's two-run seventh with a base hit to left and Anthros' one-out single put her team on the board. Dyer delivered an RBI double, bringing the tying run to the plate with one away — unfortunately, a pop-up and a line out ended the Union County threat.

Anthros fanned six and walked two in the circle while going 2 for 4 with a run and an RBI at the plate.

Dyer drove in one during a 1-for-4 day; Mikala Souther went 1 for 2 with a walk; Grisham finished 1 for 3 with a run; sophomore Jules Dyer walked.

Lady Panthers 2, Lanier 5 - Union County came out flat during game two on a



Freshman Addison Whitener got the start vs. Lanier on Saturday in Lumpkin County. Whitener provided Union its only hit at Rockmart on Thursday and went 1 for 4 with 2 runs during the win over Lumpkin County. Photo/Todd Forrest

muggy afternoon in Dahlonega on Saturday, taking a 5-2 loss to the Longhorns.

Lanier mounted a 5-0 advantage before Union got one run in the sixth and another in the seventh.

The Lady Panthers finished with only three hits - one apiece from Anthros, Mullanack and senior Reese Kelley.

Union County used five pitchers on the day: Whitener, Kelley, freshman Lexi Davenport and sophomore Ayla

Jamison. Mullanack scored on an error in the sixth to prevent the shutout, and then Kelley doubled to begin the seventh -- coming around to score on a groundout.

Up next - The Lady Panthers resume region play on Tuesday, Aug. 20 when they host North Murray at 5:30 p.m. Union County visits Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe (LFO) on Thursday, Aug. 22 at 5:30 p.m.



Senior first-baseman Sloane Dyer drives in two runs with a base hit up the middle at Lumpkin County during her 3-hit, 5-RBI game on Saturday. Photo/Todd Forrest



Jaslyn Roberts drops down a squeeze bunt to score a run vs. Lumpkin County on Saturday. Photo/Todd Forrest



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