

# Sports

See the Sports Section at ngame.com

## Volleyball: Inconsistency derails Union vs Dawson, Gilmer

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@ngame.com

Union County was unable to score its first win of 2020, dropping a pair of tightly-contested matches to Dawson County and at Gilmer.

Despite battling down-to-the-wire in both contests last week, the Lady Panthers were unable to catch a break in the latter stages, allowing their Class AAA opponents to take six of the seven sets.

Union's lone set victory came on Tuesday in a 3-1 loss to seventh-ranked Dawson County in a match that saw Union County tied or ahead late in three of four sets.

"Dawson was a great match up, and it was incredible to see how we improved since our previous matches at Lumpkin," Union head coach Anna Chapman said. "We played much tighter matches and finally got a win in the third set. It felt good to see them overcome after two hard-fought sets. The scores of each set show just how close it was."

Trailing 6-2, the Lady Panthers clawed ahead 11-7 in the opening stanza. After Dawson used an 8-2 spurt to snatch a 15-13 advantage, Union rattled off four-straight points for a 17-15 lead.

Unfortunately, it was all Lady Tigers the rest of the way, quickly racing ahead 21-17, en route to a 25-20 victory.

Dawson took the second frame 25-15, leading wire-to-



Molly Kay West recorded 6 aces vs. Dawson. Photo/Todd Forrest

wire to take a 2-0 advantage. Falling into a 9-3 hole, the Lady Panthers hung around, pulling within four on two occasions at 11-7 and 18-14 until Dawson put things out of reach with six-straight points for a 24-14 margin.

However, it was Union County's turn to put the visitors in an early deficit during the third set, storming out front 7-1. The Lady Tigers rallied for a 10-9 lead, eventually stretching it to 16-13 and 19-16. But the Lady Panthers

weren't going away quietly. With junior Morgan Fussell serving six-consecutive winners, Union pulled ahead 22-19.

Dawson inched within a point at 22-21 and 24-23 but was unable to even the score as the Lady Panthers prevailed 25-23.

With a chance to tied the match at two wins apiece, Union County came out strong in set four with early leads of 7-3, 8-5 and 9-6. But the Lady Tigers quickly seized control



Junior Riley Allison (right) skies above the net during the first set vs. Dawson County Photo/Todd Forrest

and appeared to have the home team on the ropes with a 17-12 advantage.

Trailing 21-16, the Lady Panthers had one more comeback left in the tank, tying the score at 21-21. That's as close as they would get, however, as four of the next five points swung in Dawson's favor.

Union traveled to Gilmer on Thursday and were unable to hang on late, dropping straight sets in a 3-0 loss.

"I've noticed that we have a pattern we need to break," Chapman said. "It's common for us, at this point, to get behind in the beginning or middle of a set, then have a great run of points, but it's too late. We are really going to work on coming out strong from the first serve and maintaining a lead."

The Lady Panthers fell 25-19 in the opener before suffering a 25-20 loss in set two and a 25-18 defeat in the clincher.

"(We) had some great

rallies and plays that required everything from everyone on the court," Chapman said. "We were able to improvise and keep the ball in play, the ultimate goal in those situations. Morgan Fussell had a great night in terms of kills and Sofia Swartz was putting up blocks left and right."

"We are so close to having all the pieces in the right place but it will take a little time and a little flexibility. COVID set us back by not having tryouts in the spring and then really hindered our summer work. The athletes have come a long way in the short amount of time we've been a team, including the short time I've been their coach. We are getting to know each other and trust each other. Our season is just heating up and we are ready."

**Up next:** Union County will visit Chestatee on Tuesday. The JV gets underway at 5 p.m. with the varsity to follow. The Lady Panthers return

home Thursday to host White County and Stephens County in a varsity-only tri-match at 5 p.m.

**Stats at Gilmer:** Kills - Fussell and Saylor Noe 9, Haley Noe 6, Riley Allison 5, Swartz 4, Emma Whicker 3, Molly Kay West 1

Aces - Whicker 3, Allison, Fussell and Saylor Noe 2, Haley Noe 1

Blocks (solo) - Swartz 7, Fussell 4; (assisted) Whicker 3, Fussell 2, Swartz 1

Digs - Haley Noe 6, Allison 5, West 3, Saylor Noe 1

**Stats vs. Dawson County:** Kills - Saylor Noe 12, Allison 10, Fussell 9, Haley Noe 3, Whicker 2, Swartz 1

Aces - West, Allison and Fussell 6, Saylor Noe 4

Blocks (solo) - Fussell 5; (assisted) Fussell and Whicker 1

Digs - Haley Noe 5, Allison and Fussell 6, West 2, Olivia Blocker, Saylor Noe and Whicker 1.

8.25.2020	Chestatee/West Hall	5:00/6:00	Away - Chestatee	JV/Varsity
8.27.2020	White Co/Stephens Co	5:00/7:00	Home	Varsity Only
9.1.2020	East Hall/Banks Co	5:00/6:00	Away - East Hall	JV/Varsity
9.3.2020	Dawson Co/Johnson	5:00/6:00	Away - Dawson Co	JV/Varsity
9.10.2020	Elbert Co/Banks Co	5:00/7:00	Home	Varsity Only
9.15.2020	Commerce/LOA	5:00/6:00	Away - Commerce	Varsity Only
9.22.2020	Chestatee/Elbert	5:00/7:00	Home	Varsity Only
9.24.2020	Oglethorpe/Washington Wilkes	5:00/6:00	Away - Oglethorpe	Varsity Only
10.1/2020	Rabun/Putnam	5:00/7:00	Home	Varsity Only



A Morgan Fussell (20) kill helped turn the tide during Union's third-set victory vs Dawson. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sofia Swartz (22) soars for a block during last week's match vs Dawson County. Photo/Todd Forrest