

# Sports

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## Defense sparks fourth quarter surge as Panthers improve to 6-0

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After surrendering the eighth-most points in school history during a 74-57 win at Putnam County, the much-maligned Union County defense preserved the 8th ranked Panthers' perfect record with an A-plus performance during the second half of Friday's 35-14 victory over Elbert County (3-3, 2-1).

In a season dominated by record-breaking offensive statistics and highlight-reel performances, the Union County defense used four fourth quarter turnovers to light a spark under a stagnant offense that went on to outscore the Blue Devils 28-0 over the game's final 16 minutes.

"Our defense played excellent tonight," senior wide receiver Sawyer Drake said after the game. "They kept getting us the ball back at the end. Three turnovers in-a-row, it doesn't get any better than that."

Fresh off a positive week of practice, Union County head coach Brian Allison was confident that his defense was primed for a bounce-back performance.

"I thought our guys did a nice job defensively after the week before, and coming in, I think of felt like they would," he said. "Like a team like Elbert to only 14 points is a really big turnaround."

Early on, the Panthers (6-0, 3-0) were dealt a punch to the gut when the team's leading receiver Kyle Morlock was lost to a broken ankle on the first play of the game.

With Morlock out, Drake stepped up and provided a career-high 169 receiving yards to go with seven grabs and two scores.

"I hate it for Kyle, he is one of the best football players that I've ever played with, and it's just a tough situation," Drake said. "We knew coming in that it was going to be a tight ball game so it feels really great to come out on top after a hard-fought battle like that."

However, it took a while for Drake and the shellshocked offense to shake the loss of Morlock as they went scoreless on their first four possessions with two punts, a fumble on 4th-and-2 and Pierson Allison's first interception of the season.

The offense would come to life just in time to even the score at halftime on a 19-yard touchdown catch by Cayden Rich, but Elbert responded with a 12-play, 69-yard drive to retake the lead at 14-7 on the opening series of the third quarter.

"I think the injury (to Morlock) affected our mindset quite a bit but getting that touchdown before the half was huge," Coach Allison said. "That score got our offense back into the flow and it gave us some momentum going into halftime. I don't know what it was that flipped (the switch) right there, I'd like to say it was adjustments, but maybe we just started playing a harder with a little more intensity and urgency, because early on, we were having a hard time."

Tied at 14-14 following



Senior linebacker Sloan Sutton (6) celebrates after forcing Elbert County's second fumble of the fourth quarter. Pierson Allison came out of the pile with the football after Sutton stripped Blue Devils' star running back Shun Davis (3) on a third down carry. Photo/Todd Forrest

advantage. A first-down give to Daniel went for 14 then a 34-yard wheel route to a wide-open Mason McCombs made it 28-14 at the 7:44 mark.

The final dagger came on the first play of the ensuing Elbert County drive when Clayton Lester picked off a pass attempt at the 39-yard line and returned it inside the 20.

From his outside linebacker position, Lester dropped into zone coverage, read the eyes of the quarterback and jumped in front of the inside receiver on a 10-yard comeback route.

Two plays later, the Union County offense capitalized on the interception when Drake won a jump-ball at the goal line for his second touchdown grab of the night.

Trailing 35-14 with 6:29 remaining, the Blue Devils moved into Panther territory before turning it over on downs at the 33-yard line with 3:08 remaining.

Elbert's final drive came to an end with a Noah Underwood interception -- the fourth takeaway of the fourth quarter after three-plus quarters of turnover-free football from the Blue Devil offense.

"Elbert had some really big dudes and we were able to hang in there with them and play hard," Coach Allison said. "We also adjusted nicely because (Morlock) was supposed to play some defense for us, as well."

Even with the 21-0 fourth quarter, Elbert did a nice job of keeping the Union County offense on the sidelines. The final play-count tally saw the Blue Devils' offense run 77 plays to only 45 for Union -- its lowest total since last year's Social Circle game that featured a running clock the entire second half after the Panthers led 42-0.

Meanwhile, Union County's 121 rushing yards was its lowest mark in a regular-season game since last year's Elbert County game (103).

After getting bottled up in the first half, Daniel finished with solid numbers of 72 yards and a score on 10 carries. He also caught two passes for 42

yards.

Despite starting only 4-for-10, Pierson Allison ended up 15-for-23 with 327 yards, four touchdowns and an interception. He also gained 37 yards on five carries.

McCombs finished his day with three grabs for 80 yards and a score; Rich had one catch for 19 yards and a touchdown; Zion Ross caught one pass for 11 yards and Morlock picked up four on his only reception.

Defensive stats were incomplete as of Monday morning but the following numbers were available: Sutton 6 solo, 11 assisted tackles, 1 TFL; Underwood 6 solo, 5 assisted, 2 TFL, 1 int; Lester 4 solo, 5 assisted, 1 int; Hunter Young 1 solo.

The win puts Union County in the driver's seat for another Region Championship showdown with Rabun County in the regular-season finale.

The Panthers are off this week but will return to action in two weeks when they visit Banks County. The team will practice three days this week prior to Thursday's junior

varsity game.

As for Elbert, they will face the tough task of bouncing back vs the Region Champions when they host Rabun

County in two weeks.

Union County will be back in Blairsville on Oct. 25 for the Homecoming Game vs Oglethorpe County.



Senior Cayden Rich gets airborne to bat down an Elbert pass attempt in the first half. Photo/Todd Forrest

## Old Union Women's Golf Association Final Play Day of the Season with a Boo-Spectacular Event



Old Union Women's Golf Association

The O UWGA had their final play day of the season, September 30, 2019. Since many of the girls will soon be heading home to their respective homes for the fall and winter it was decided to end the season with a Boo-Spectacular Day! It was the Witches vs. the Black Cats, ending with a tie between the two teams, however the tie breaker went to the

Black Cats! The afternoon continued with food, dessert and plenty of brew!

The league will continue with their fall/winter season October 14, tee time moving forward from 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Again thank you Old Union Golf Course for your support and hard work making this a very successful and fun year! For more information visit our website [www.OldUnion-WGA.com](http://www.OldUnion-WGA.com) or call/text Karen Mussoline at 352-638-3649.

## Youth Football: Panthers split vs Lumpkin, White County

**10U Panthers** - The Panthers would kick it off to begin the game as No.54 Alan Godinez would boot it all the way to the 10-yard line. That would set-up a long drive for Lumpkin to try and score.

The Panther defense stopped them and the first drive for the offense would be successful as No.1 Brandon Lynch scored the touchdown and the two-point conversion. As the Panthers kicked it back off to the Indians, Lynch stripped the ball loose and recovered it.

The Panthers went back out on offense and Lynch scored his second touchdown of the day. No.25 Kash Smith would get the extra-point and Union County was in charge 15-0.

The Panthers would get another kick off fumble recovery, this one by No.8 Chetley Cox.

And what do the Panthers do? They call on the kid who got the recovery and Cox would score his first touchdown of the game. The extra-point was unsuccessful but the Panthers

were still up 21-0.

The defense was outstanding as No.48 Gunner Franklin finished with multiple tackles for a loss and No.22 Jaxon Totherow would record a couple of sacks, along with three tackles in the backfield.

Later on in the second quarter, Lynch scored his third touchdown of the game as the Panthers went up 28-0 at the half.

That would be the final score as Union's 10U team improved to 2-2 on the year.

**9U Panthers** - The Panthers took on the White County Warriors but game did not count and they will meet again next week.

The Panthers scored early in the game as No.13 Camden Kendrick would break a huge touchdown run and Micah Wallace would convert the two point conversion to go up 8-0.

White County would answer back with a touchdown, but a missed the extra-point kept Union in front 8-6.



Over the weekend, Union County's 10U Panthers came out on top, 28-0 at Lumpkin County.

The Panthers had a lengthy drive after No.88 Micah Wallace hauled in a big catch and was taken down at the 12-yard line, but the Panthers couldn't punch it in for the score.

White County got the

ball back and scored to end the second quarter. Then, the second half was a straight-up defensive battle, but White County scored on a long rushing touchdown. As a result, the Panthers came up short in this one, 18-8.



## Union County Recreation Department

### Basketball Registration

Age control date has changed.

Age you are September 1st is the age group you play in.

**Age Group** **Registration Ends**

9/10 yr olds October 18th

11/12 yr olds October 18th

Registration fee is \$50 and open to both boys and girls.

Registration can be completed online

at [unioncountygva.gov](http://unioncountygva.gov) or at the Recreation Office

located at 310 Wellborn Street.

If you need any additional information, please call 706-439-6074.