

# Sports

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## Basketball: Hughes and Ellis combine for 30 in scrimmage win over Pickens

### Lady Panthers come up short vs. No. 8 Pickens, rebound with rout of Stephens County

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Union County basketball split Thursday's scrimmage contest vs. Class AAAA Pickens County ahead of the Lady Panthers' season-opening blowout of Class AAA Stephens County on Saturday.

Union returns to the hardwood Tuesday when they host Habersham Central at 6 p.m. And despite the returning football players joining the men's squad this week, Panthers head coach Corey Garrett said its unlikely they will see any minutes vs. the Raiders or during Wednesday's trip to Rabun Gap.

**Panthers 64, Pickens 48** - Senior Lake Hughes and freshman Jude Ellis poured in 15 points apiece as Union County scored the game's first 12 points and never trailed during Thursday's scrimmage win.

Hughes and fellow senior Landon Kight did most of the heavy lifting in the first quarter before the youngsters did their damage. Hughes sparked a 14-6 opening frame with consecutive 3-pointers, then Kight made it 8-0 with a pair of put-backs.

Ellis capped the 12-0 run with a driving lay-up before Kight closed the quarter with a short jumper.

Ellis began his seven-point second period with a dribble-drive for two. Then, following a Hayden Payne put-back, Ellis gave Union a 23-8 lead with a steal-and-score and a trey.

But Pickens wouldn't go away, outscoring the Panthers 14-2 over the final 5:25 of the half to slice the margin to 25-22 at the break.

The Dragons evened the score at 29-29 early in the third but Austin Taylor and Ellis drilled consecutive 3s to push the difference back to six.

Ahead 35-31, freshman Houston Henry found his range with a triple, then Ellis followed suit, spotting the Panthers a 41-31 lead. Henry closed the quarter by weaving his way through traffic for a lay-in that opened a 45-33 advantage after three.

A pair of Dragons' baskets moved the visitors within eight at 45-37 but the Union upperclassmen tightened the clamps. Hughes, Kight, Taylor and Daniel Snow all chipped in to build a 59-42 lead just past the midway point of the fourth.

Following a 6-0 Pickens run, Payne's reverse layup resulted in an and-one with 2:14 remaining. Thirty-three seconds later, Hughes crashed the boards and drew a foul, sending him to the line where he sank both tries for a 64-48 final.

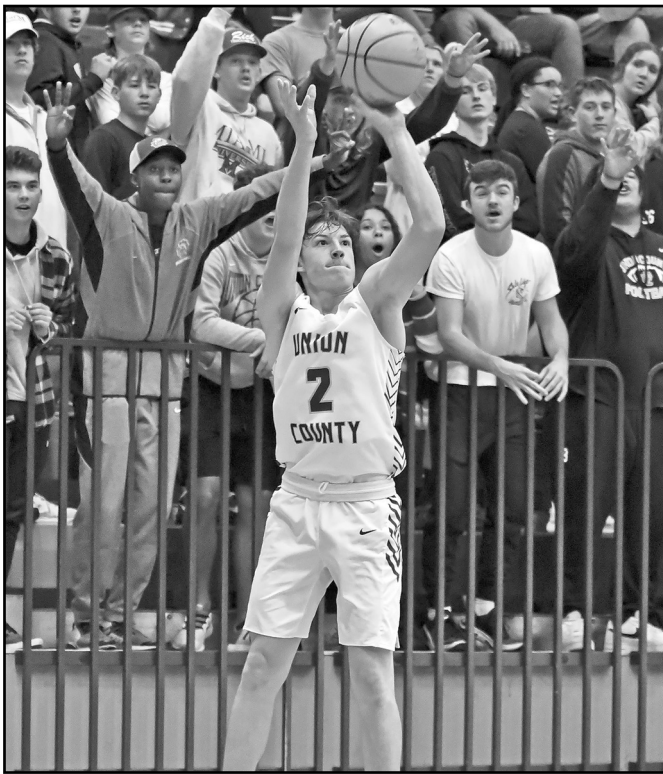
Kight finished with 12 points and a team-high 8 rebounds. Payne had 9 points and 7 boards. Taylor added 6 points and 4 assists; Henry had 5 points on 2-of-4 shooting to go with 3 assists and 3 steals during a game-high 30 minutes. Snow finished with 2 points and 4 assists.

Hughes recorded 5 rebounds and 3 steals on 3-of-6 shooting from long distance. Ellis had 4 boards, 3 assists and shot 3 of 8 from 3-point range.

As a team, Union shot just 3 for 8 (38%) at the line. They connected on 43% from the floor and 35% (9 for 26) from downtown.

The Panthers lost the turnover battle 21-18 but dominated 11-1 on second-chance points thanks to a 43-36 rebounding advantage.

Along with the missing



Senior Lake Hughes launches a corner 3 in front of an energetic home crowd vs. Pickens. Photo/Todd Forrest

football players, Union also played without junior returning-starter Eli Underwood, who is recovering from a twisted ankle.

**Lady Panthers 70, Stephens County 46** - Union County opened with a 'W' for the fourth time in five years, putting the Indians away with a 30-point first quarter -- the team's first 30-point frame since a 2019 Battle of the States victory over Polk County, Tennessee.

The Lady Panthers opened up their largest lead of the half at 35-11 before taking a 45-22 advantage into the break.

Six different players scored at least 4 points over the first two periods, led by 13 from senior Ava Hunter. Fellow 12th grader Rebekah Chambers added 9 points and freshman Ariel McCarter scored eight. Junior Corinne Hill and sophomore Sofia McNabb chipped in five apiece while sophomore Lara Turner had four.

Trailing 50-26, Stephens used a 6-0 spurt to trim the margin to 50-32 at the 3:16 mark of the third while foul trouble mounted on the Union bigs. Chambers returned with four fouls and immediately made her presence felt, hitting a pair of free throws, then feeding Turner under the basket for two with a bounce pass from the high post.

Turner sank two free

throws at the 2:35 mark, followed by buckets from McNabb, Hill and Hunter to cap a 12-0 run that provided Union a 62-32 cushion after three.

Head coach Mandy Hunter allowed her youngsters to gain valuable experience during a mercy-rule shortened 6-minute final frame as Stephens outscored the Union reserves 14-8.

Hunter led all scorers with 17 points and Chambers finished with 11. Hill and Turner ended the game with 9 points each; McCarter scored eight, McNabb had seven and sophomore Katie Byers added five.

Senior Ansley Collins and freshman Aubrie Akins each chipped in a basket to finish with 2 points.

The Lady Panthers hit 17 of 26 from the free throw line and connected on three shots from beyond the arc.

**Lady Panthers 59, No. 8 Pickens 65** - Union nearly erased a 13-point deficit over the final 2:56, pulling within four at 63-59 just shy of the 1-minute mark.

Still a 63-59 ball game with 35 seconds remaining, a costly Union turnover led to Pickens' game-clinching layup on the other end.

The Dragons entered the fourth quarter out front 52-45 and continued to keep Union at bay with leads of 59-47 and 62-



Senior Rebekah Chambers goes up strong during the second half of Union County's win over Stephens County. Photo/Todd Forrest

50. A 1-for-2 trip to the charity line with 3:25 to go opened up Pickens' largest advantage of the night at 63-50.

Union County responded with a 9-0 run, sparked by a pull-up jumper from Turner with 2:56 remaining. McNabb knocked down a trey from the top of the key 53 seconds later, then Chambers scored in the post to cut the deficit to 63-57 at the 1:29 mark.

A block by Hunter led to a Lady Panthers' basket when Chambers scored on a put back with 64 seconds left. Pickens

would miss the front-end of a 1-and-1 at the 55-second mark but Union missed two attempts to make it a one possession game before eventually turning it over.

The Dragons quickly converted the Union miscue into 2 points, then took advantage of another takeaway, putting the game on ice in the final 10 seconds.

Hunter put up a game-high 25 points, matching Pickens sophomore guard Caroline Mullins, who hit two fourth-quarter 3s to help the Dragons build a 13-point advantage.

Turner scored 11 points

## Ava Hunter inks scholarship with UNG



UCHS senior basketball standout Ava Hunter signs with the University of North Georgia while flanked by (L-R) her father Tim, sister Lola and mother Mandy (née Bradley). Photo/Todd Forrest

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Union County senior Ava Hunter is following in her mother's footsteps after accepting a scholarship to play basketball at the University of North Georgia in Dahlonega.

Joining Hunter for the special occasion on Wednesday, Nov. 10 were past and present UCHS and AAU coaches, family, friends, teammates and teachers.

At the event's conclusion, Hunter sat down with the *North Georgia News* to discuss her decision to become a Nighthawk.

**NGN:** Did you consider other schools or was it always your dream to follow your mom to North Georgia?

**AH:** Playing college basketball has always been my dream, but I've known from a young age that I would love to [attend] North Georgia. I was willing to go anywhere that would give me a chance to play, but I'm just so glad that it turned out to

be North Georgia. It's a dream come true.

**NGN:** Other than the family connections, what else attracted you to the school and the basketball program?

**AH:** I love all the coaches, I love that it's not too far from home and I just love everything about it. I can't wait.

**NGN:** Have you decided on a major?

**AH:** I'll probably go into teaching.

**NGN:** Entering your final year of high school, what goals do you have left? You've won region, scored 1,000 points, made the Elite 8 and you're an All-State player? What would make this year a success?

**AH:** I don't know yet. I haven't really thought about. I just want to do my best to help the team win. I'm thankful we were able to have summer to prepare for this season and I think it's going to show on the court. It's going to be a great year.

**NGN:** What's it going to be like playing for your mom

while Chambers and Hill added 8 points apiece. McNabb scored five and sophomore Morgan Warren had 2 points.

The first quarter saw a see-saw affair with Union owning narrow advantages of 5-3, 10-6, 12-9, 16-12 and 17-14. The Lady Panthers' final lead of the contest came via a 17-15 score at the 2:04 mark of the frame before Pickens built a 29-17 second-quarter margin on the heels of a 15-0 run.

A Hunter deuce stopped the bleeding with 3:50 left in the second, then the senior forced a steal and drew a foul on the ensuing fast break. After Hunter hit 1-of-2 at the line, Hill sank a baseline jumper to pull Union within seven at 29-22.

That deficit would hold into the third stanza as Pickens enjoyed a 37-30 lead at the intermission.

Hill, Chambers, Hunter and Turner moved the Lady Panthers within a point at 39-38, less than three minutes into the third. Pickens answered with six straight but Hunter and Turner kept Union within one possession at 45-43.

The Dragons outscored the home team 7-2 over the third quarter's final 1:35 to open up a bit of breathing room at 52-45 entering the fourth.

**Up next:** Union County hosts Habersham Central on Tuesday beginning at 6 p.m.

The week's action wraps up on Wednesday when Union County hits the road for the first time with a 6 p.m. visit to Rabun Gap.

*Complete season preview interviews with Coach Hunter and Coach Garrett will be included in next week's paper.*



Jude Ellis splits a pair of Dragons on a second-half layup. The freshman scored 15 points to finish as the game's co-leader. Photo/Todd Forrest

# Football: Lovett defense stifles Panthers in 28-7 first-round loss

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Atlanta - The second-seeded Lovett Lions (8-3) jumped out to a 21-0 halftime lead, which proved more than enough in a 28-7 season-ending loss for the Panthers (3-7).

Union County's lone score came with 21 seconds left in the game when senior quarterback Logan Helcher hit sophomore Caiden Tanner on a quick 5-yard strike in the endzone.

The symbolic touchdown pass marked the final play of Helcher's career in a passing-of-the-torch moment to Tanner, who will enter 2022 as the frontrunner to replace Helcher under center.

Despite the loss, the Union County defense allowed its third-lowest scoring output of the year -- only Banks and Riverside put up fewer points than Lovett. And it was obvious, even in the opening minutes, that the Panthers defense were ready to play.

After Helcher was picked off on the first play of the game, the Union defense stuffed Lovett on consecutive runs from the 6-yard line, forcing a fumble on the second play that gave possession back to the Panthers.

Unfortunately, Lovett denied Union on fourth and 4 at the 30-yard line before punching in an 8-yard touchdown run on a fourth down of its own.

Moments later, a third-down sack forced a Union punt and Lovett capitalized, breaking loose on a 33-yard touchdown run to grab an early 14-0 advantage.

Still down 14-0 in the



Senior Logan Helcher ended his UCHS career with a touchdown pass on the final play. Photo/Todd Forrest

second, freshman Connor Schuknecht moved the chains with a fourth-down run. Three plays later, on third and 4, Helcher went up top to senior Keyton Chitwood, who hauled in an acrobatic 38-yard catch at the Lovett 14. But faced with fourth and 9 at the 13, Helcher's pass attempt fell incomplete

with 7:33 left in the half. Lovett jumped on the defensive momentum, driving 87 yards for a 21-0 advantage at the 3:24 mark.

The Panthers final series of the half ended in a three-and-out, but the defense forced the Lions into a punt as time expired.

Lovett put the game away late in the third when they forced a Union fumble at the Panthers' 12-yard line, setting up a 9-yard touchdown strike on third and 7.

Even with the 21-point loss, Union County and Lovett ended the game nearly even in total yards. The Panthers



Freshman running back Connor Schuknecht takes a Lovett defender for a ride during the first half of Friday's loss. Photo/Todd Forrest

finished with 213 yards of total offense while holding Lovett to 236 yards - the second lowest opponent total of the season behind Riverside's 142.

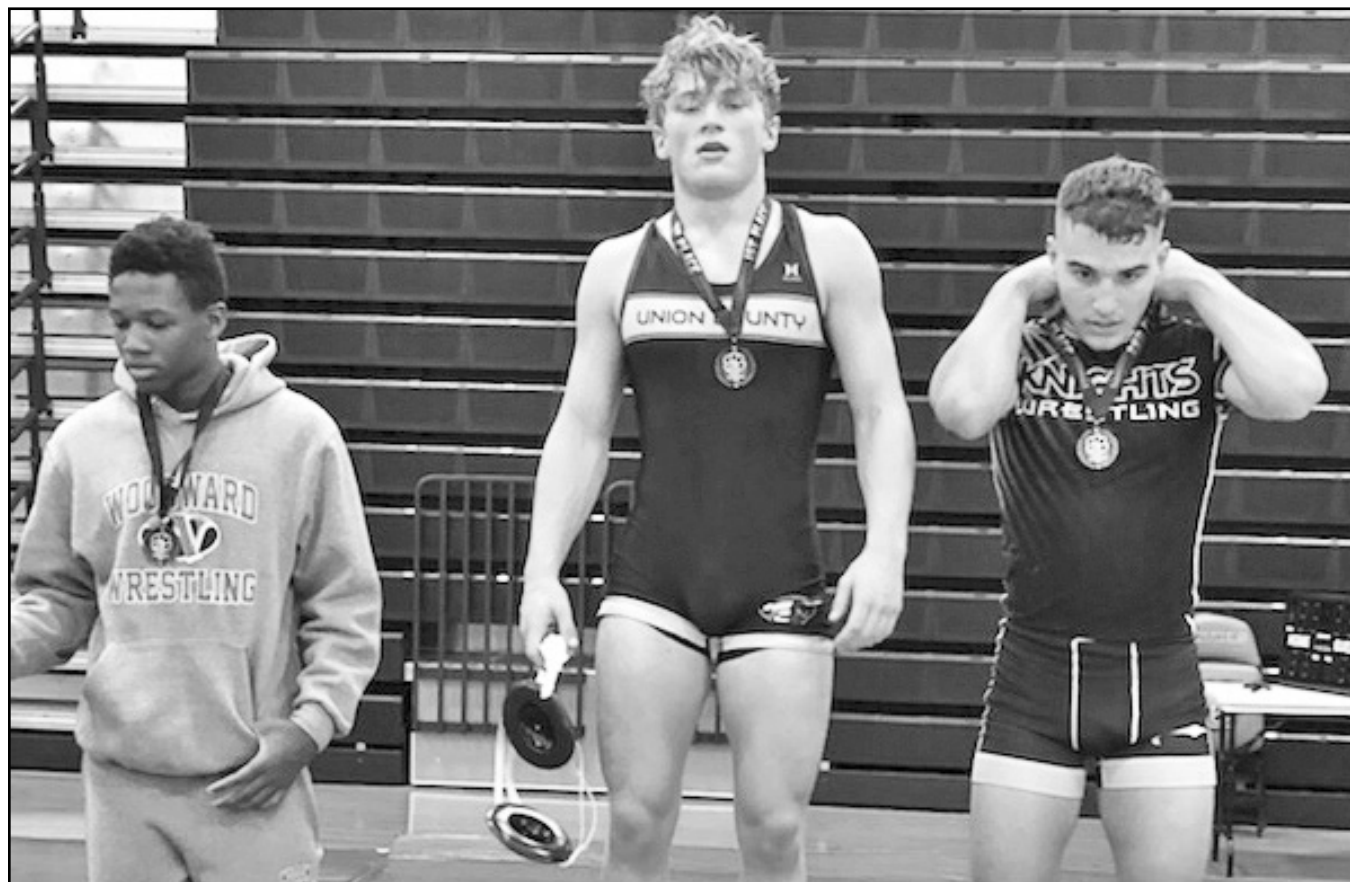
Through the air, Union surpassed Lovett 105-74, but the Lions edged the visitors on the ground, 162-108.

The Panthers were vic-

timized, however, by three turnovers and a 24% (4-for-17) conversion rate on third and fourth down.

In the coming weeks, the North Georgia News and head coach Michael Perry will discuss the 2021 season with an in-depth interview.

## Wrestling: Brady Guild first at Jackson; seven Panthers in top five



It was a great day for Union County High School and Union County Wrestling in Jefferson on Saturday. Brady Guild (pictured) took home gold at the Jackson County Panther Scramble at 170 pounds. Sean Philips was third at 180; Landon Clark placed fourth at 126; Kanon Abercrombie was fifth at 132; Huck Whisenhunt came in fifth at 170; freshman Payton Legatt was fifth at 160 and freshman Asa Smith-Foot took fifth at 145. On the JV side, Brooke Kennedy came in third at 195 and Kaiden Smith placed third at 120. Photo/Michael Smith-Foot

## Twelve-year old Cody Dupuis first overall at Meeks Park Color Run



Top: (L-R) The top-three overall finishers: third-place Andy Gwynn, second-place Brayden Ball and winner Cody Dupuis. Bottom: Dupuis receives his Color Run gold medal on Nov. 6.

### Union County Middle & High School Rockin' Raider Meet Highlights

<b>50 Free</b> 1st- Andrew Nushtayev (MS) 3rd- Eli Gwynn (MS) 6th- Ian Lander (MS) 7th- Andrew Farmer (MS) 10th- Wyatt Chandler (MS) 1st- Hunter White (HS) 10th- Nicholas Nushtayev (HS)	<b>100 Free</b> 3rd- Hunter White (HS) 5th- Nicholas Nushtayev (HS) 7th- Blake Caputi (HS) 10th- Courtney Foster (HS) 6th- Isabel Hoover (MS) 7th- Ava Wheeler (MS)	<b>100 IM</b> 4th- Eli Gwynn (MS) 2nd- Reese Jones (MS)
<b>50 Back</b> 4th- Andrew Farmer (MS) 6th- Ian Lander (MS) 8th- Wyatt Chandler (MS) 10th- Clara Kazmierzak (MS)	<b>50 Fly</b> 2nd- Andrew Nushtayev (MS) 8th- Ava Serrano (MS)	<b>200 Free</b> 6th- Lily Helton (HS)
<b>200 Medley Relay</b> 4th- Preston Perren, Hunter White, Blake Caputi, Nicholas Nushtayev (HS) 2nd- Wyatt Chandler, Eli Gwynn, Andrew Nushtayev, Ian Lander (MS) 2nd- Clara Kazmierzak, Reese Jones, Ava Wheeler, Ava Serrano (MS)		
<b>200 Free Relay</b> 4th- Nicholas Nushtayev, Preston Perren, Blake Caputi, Hunter White (HS) 2nd- Eli Gwynn, Andrew Farmer, Ian Lander, Andrew Nushtayev (MS) 1st- Lily Helton, Rachel Reid, Olivia Loyd, Grace Cook (HS) 9th- Meghan Cory, Lilly Collins, Hannah Kazmierzak, Cassie Flowers (HS)		

### Union County Middle & High School Hawaiian Luau Meet Highlights

<b>100 IM</b> 4th- Eli Gwynn (MS) 2nd- Reese Jones (MS)	<b>100 Fly</b> 5th- Blake Caputi (HS) 1st- Hannah Sheffield (HS)	<b>50 Fly</b> 3rd- Andrew Nushtayev (MS) 4th- Ava Serrano (MS)
<b>50 Free</b> 3rd- Nicholas Nushtayev (HS) 6th- Blake Caputi (HS) 1st- Andrew Nushtayev (MS) 2nd- Ava Serrano (MS)	<b>3rd Overall: HS Girls</b> <b>5th Overall: HS Boys</b> <b>3rd Overall: MS Girls</b> <b>4th Overall: MS Boys</b>	<b>100 Free</b> 6th- Nicholas Nushtayev (HS) 10th- Michael Leird (HS) 7th- Andrew Farmer (MS) 3rd- Hannah Sheffield (HS) 4th- Ava Wheeler (MS) 6th- Isabel Hoover (MS)
<b>50 Back</b> 8th- Ian Lander (MS) 2nd- Clara Kazmierzak (MS) 10th- Samantha Odum (MS)	<b>100 Back</b> 2nd- Lily Helton (HS) 7th- Anniston Howse (HS) 8th- Lilly Collins (HS)	<b>50 Breast</b> 3rd- Eli Gwynn (MS) 2nd- Reese Jones (MS) 5th- Clara Kazmierzak (MS) 8th- Ava Wheeler (MS)
<b>200 Medley Relay</b> 5th- Michael Leird, Nicholas Nushtayev, Blake Caputi, Grayden Cobb (HS) 5th- Wyatt Chandler, Eli Gwynn, Andrew Nushtayev, Ian Lander (MS) 4th- Hannah Kazmierzak, Meghan Cory, Lily Helton, Hannah Sheffield (HS) 2nd- Isabel Hoover, Reese Jones, Ava Serrano, Clara Kazmierzak (MS)		
<b>200 Free Relay</b> 5th- Blake Caputi, Grayden Cobb, Michael Leird, Nicholas Nushtayev (HS) 5th- Eli Gwynn, Andrew Farmer, Ian Lander, Andrew Nushtayev (MS) 9th- Lily Helton, Anniston Howse, Lilly Collins, Hannah Sheffield (HS) 7th- Hannah Kazmierzak, Cassie Flowers, Meghan Cory, Olivia Loyd (HS)		

## Team SANTOS victorious at November's UCHS soccer fundraiser



Team SANTOS took home the November title at the UCHS soccer program's monthly fundraiser tournament.

### Union County Recreation Department (Age: 50 and over) Winter Session 2021-22 Fitness Family Programs

Winter is coming soon! We would love for you to join us for our Winter Fitness Family classes! Union County Recreation Department will be offering many fabulous fitness class options for the Winter 2021-22 session. We just had the largest Fall enrollment yet, and we hope to set a record for Winter enrollment!

Here is the list of all our fitness classes that will be offered for the session:

- Mini-Spinning Cardio Class** (M/W/F) 8:30-9:30 AM \$15 (Winter special)
- Regular Aerobics Fitness** (T/Th) @ 8:30-9:30 AM \$25
- Advanced Strength-Core Class** (M/W/F) @ 9:45-10:45 AM \$40
- Am Beginner Pilates-Core Class** (T/Th) @ 11-11:45 AM \$40
- Intro Ballroom Dancing Class** (M) @ 1:15-2:30 PM \$25/single \$35/couple
- Am Intermediate Step-Aerobics Combo** (M/W/F) @ 11:00-11:50 AM \$45
- Dance Jams** (T/Th) @ 10:00-10:45 AM \$45
- Chair Fitness-Aerobics Class** (T/W/Th) @ 1:15-2:00 PM \$25
- Zumba w/Lisa** (M/W) @ 8:30-9:30 \$50
- \*\*Zumba Fitness w/Beth** 5-6 PM (T/Th) \$50
- \*\*PM Step-Aerobics combo class** 5-6 PM (M/W) \$40

\*Winter Session Registration opens on 11/1/2021 and ends on 11/19/21 or "when classes fill to capacity". You can register at the New Union County Recreation Support Center Office located at 519 Industrial Blvd. next to the Health Department. Please contact Jennifer at 706-487-4453 with any questions!