

Sports

See the Sports Section at nghanews.com

Lady Panthers third at BOTS; rout Oglethorpe, Greene over the weekend

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nghanews.com

The Union County Lady Panthers were denied a trip to the Battle of the States finals thanks to the tournament's defending champions, Hayesville, NC and some shaky officiating in the fourth quarter of that game.

The Lady Panthers quickly put the heartbreaking loss behind them and went on to crush Piedmont, Ala 62-35 in the Consolation Game.

After tournament games on Monday and Tuesday, Union went on the road to Oglethorpe County on Friday where they picked up an easy Region win.

Saturday, the Lady Panthers played their fourth game of the week against Greene County - a thorn in Union's side for the last two years. But this time, the Lady Panthers meant business and dismantled the Lady Tigers for four quarters in a 3-0 win that moves Union to 3-0 in Region 8-AA and 10-4 overall.

Lady Panthers 43 Hayesville, NC 45

Hiawassee - In the early going, the referees weren't a factor as Union's offense - that's been a well-oiled machine of late - came out flat and the Lady Yellow Jackets kept Union out-of-sync for the better part of three quarters.

The Lady Panthers trailed 28-23 at the half and Hayesville continued to pull away - opening up a 41-29 advantage with 1:10 left in the third.

Trailing 41-31 entering the fourth, a Union turnover allowed the Lady Jackets to regain its 12-point margin at 43-31.

That score would hold up until Hayesville coughed up the ball and Lisa Nalasci took advantage. The senior nailed a trey at the 5:20 mark that brought the Lady Panthers to within nine - providing Union with a much-needed spark.

With 4:46 left, Brooke Maddox attacked the hoop and converted a highly contested layup to cut the Hayesville lead to 43-36.

With momentum shifting to the Purple and Gold, Lady Luck remained on Hayesville's side as the Lady Jackets banked in a long jumper to pull ahead by nine with 3:30 left in the game.

On Union's ensuing possession, Maddox dished off to Nalasci in the paint, who added another deuce at the three-minute mark. Maddox would then come through on the defensive end with a steal and hit Nalasci on the left wing for a trey and a foul. She would misfire on the free throw attempt but nonetheless, Union



The Union County Lady Panthers with the Battle of the States' third place trophy after defeating Piedmont, Ala. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

was within four, at 45-41 with 2:24 remaining.

Just inside of two minutes, Union took advantage of another Hayesville turnover and Kaitlyn Day connected on a running jumper to bring the Lady Panthers within two, 45-43, at the 1:22 mark.

Maddox picked up her fourth foul at the 1:00 mark but seconds later, Hayesville lost control of the basketball and Maddox jumped on the loose ball and called a timeout.

However, there were two other instances where the ball was loose on the court and Hayesville was immediately awarded the timeout, despite not having control of the ball. Both times Union County had the possession arrow in its favor, making the timeouts even tougher to swallow.

But the Lady Panthers caught a break when Hayesville forced a turnover but was unable to convert on the fast break.

With Union still trailing 45-43, the Lady Jackets missed the front-end of a 1-and-1 and with 7 seconds to play, Maddox raced down the court to get off one final shot.

As she reached the three-point arc, Maddox stumbled and the ball bounced out-of-bounds, securing the Hayesville victory.

There was some contact between Maddox and the defender right before she fell, but apparently not enough to draw a whistle.

SCORING: Day 17, Maddox 11, Nalasci 10, La. Colwell 3, Coyne 2

Lady Panthers 63 Greene County 31

Since Greene County

moved to Region 8-AA during the 2012-13 season, they have given the Lady Panthers fits.

In the first meeting back in 2013, Greene handed Union its first region loss during the regular season on a buzzer beater.

Last year, after Union was victorious in Greensboro, but the Lady Tigers knocked off Union during the Region 8-AA Tournament's Consolation Game - sending the Lady Panthers to the Wolves of Wesleyan in the first round of the State Tournament.

For Greene, three of last year's seniors are now playing college ball, and coming off a loss to lowly Social Circle the night before, the conditions were perfect for a Union rout.

The Lady Panthers came out firing on all cylinders - taking a 14-8 lead after one quarter. Junior Layne Colwell scored eight of her game-high 15 points in the opening frame.

Union quickly put the game away before halftime thanks to a 20-3 second quarter that saw the Lady Panthers go into the intermission with a 34-11 advantage.

Nalasci led the way with 9 points in the period while Day chipped in 6 points, and sophomore Holly Stroman added 5 points.

The Lady Panthers' starters finished the third quarter before giving way to the reserves at the beginning of the fourth.

During the third frame, Colwell tacked on seven more points, including her third trey of the game. Nalasci scored a pair of baskets for four points, capping off a double-double. Day and Stroman each hit a trey during the third, and Union took a 51-17 lead into the fourth.

Junior Kim Coyne scored all of her eight points in the fourth quarter, freshman Grace Wishmeyer connected from long distance, and fellow freshman Bailey Daniel added a free throw.

SCORING: Colwell 15, Nalasci 13, Day 9, Coyne 8, Stroman 8, Maddox 6, Wishmeyer 3, Daniel 1 REBOUNDS: Nalasci 11, La. Colwell 7, Coyne 5, Day 3, Stroman 2, Fair 2, Danek 2, Daniel 2, Maddox 1, Lo. Colwell 1, Lawn 1, Busse 1, Young 1 ASSISTS: Maddox 6, Day 2, Lariscy 2, La. Colwell 2, Nalasci 1, Stroman 1, Lawn 1 STEALS: Maddox 7, Nalasci 3, La. Colwell 3, Coyne 3, Day 2 BLOCKS: Nalasci 3

FG SHOOTING: Union 22-66 (33%), 3-PT SHOOTING: 9-29 (31%) FT SHOOTING: 10-14 (71%)

Lady Panthers 58 Oglethorpe County 35

Lexington - Union County completed the season sweep against the Lady Patriots by outscoring them 31-14 in the second half during a 58-35 road victory last Friday night.

Union's shooters overcame an off-night as the Lady Panthers missed 33 treys and 42 shots overall.

The Lady Patriots and Head Coach Mike Townson remained within striking distance for two-plus quarters until the Lady Panthers' defense clamped down, allowing Union some breathing room.

Entering the third quarter the Lady Panthers held a slim 27-21 lead but Layne Colwell put up 8 points in the quarter to pace Union to a 43-30 advantage after three.



Senior Kaitlyn Day - Union's All Tournament Team selection trailing 26-18.

The third quarter would belong to Union as they took the Bulldogs to the woodshed with a 21-2 quarter that blew things wide open.

Maddox used a 3-pointer and an old-fashioned three during a 10-point quarter. Layne Colwell chipped in 7 points, while Day and Nalasci added two each in the third period where Union opened up a 47-20 lead.

Maddox tacked on five more points in the fourth to finish with a game-high 21 points and 7 steals. Busse scored four, Coyne and Fair scored two each off the Union bench.

At the conclusion of the game, Day was named to the All-Tournament Team.

SCORING: Maddox 21, Nalasci 13, Day 10, La. Colwell 10, Busse 4, Fair 2, Coyne 2 REBOUNDS: Nalasci 10, La. Colwell 5, Maddox 3, Stroman 3, Danek 2, Busse 2, Wishmeyer 2, Day 1, Lariscy 1, Coyne 1 ASSISTS: Maddox 5, La. Colwell 4, Stroman 2 STEALS: Maddox 7, La. Colwell 4, Coyne 4, Stroman 3, Lariscy 1, Fair 1, BLOCKS: Nalasci 5, Busse 1

FG SHOOTING: Union 25-73 (34%), 3-PT SHOOTING: 7-32 (22%) FT SHOOTING: 8-17 (47%)

The Lady Panthers will have Tuesday off as the Union men will host Riverside Military Academy. The day off will allow Union to prep for Friday's 7 p.m. showdown at Rabun County.

Union is looking to reverse the recent trend where Rabun has won four straight in the series and haven't lost to the Lady Panthers at home since 2009. Friday night's winner will find themselves in the drivers seat in Region 8-AA.

Union will host Washington Wilkes on Saturday at 3 p.m.

Panthers put subpar BOTS in rearview; shock Greene to move to 3-0 in Region

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nghanews.com

Following a disappointing first two days of the Battle of the States Christmas Tournament, the Union County Panthers refused hang their heads.

A trip to Oglethorpe County on Friday and a home contest with Region favorites Greene County the next day could mean only one thing: the Region 8-AA schedule is officially in full swing.

A pair of losses on the first two days of the Battle of the States isn't what Head Coach Casey Jones expected, but dropping the first two games allowed the Panthers to take out their frustrations on an overmatched Polk County Tenn. squad where junior Chase Shook poured out a career high 16 points.

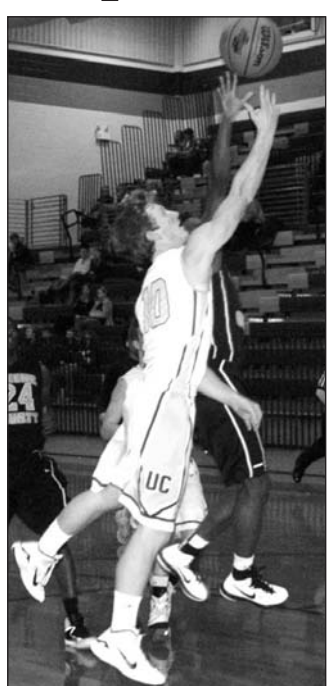
Union throttled the Wildcats and regained some of the confidence that was lost during the Hokes Bluff, Ala and White County contests.

Just two days into the new year, the Panthers went on the road to face Oglethorpe County for the second time in two weeks. This time, it was the Patriots who took control early and led 15-11 after one quarter and 31-27 at the half. However, the fourth quarter was all Union as they went on to win 66-57.

On Saturday, the Panthers faced the mighty Greene County Tigers, who have owned the Panthers over the last two years.

This time around, Union brought its A-game on the defensive end and combined with a career-high 35 points from Hunter Hughes on 15-of-18 at the line, and 19 points from Tyler Odom, the result was a 76-55 Union victory.

"We have six seniors and that win shows our maturity," Coach Jones said. "We're not going to jump up and down like we won a State title but that's what happens when we



Left to right: Seniors Hunter Hughes, Tyler Odom, and Ralston Drake led the Panthers to a one-sided win over Greene County. The trio got the job done from beyond the arc and in the paint to move the Panthers to 3-0 in Region play. Photos/Todd Forrest

Panthers 75 Greene County 54

Coming into this season, the consensus among the region's coaches was that Greene was the team to beat in 8-AA.

And after a 50-point shellacking of Social Circle the night before, the Tigers came to Blairsville expecting to roll another weaker squad and never saw the upset coming.

The Panthers, led by Hughes, came out firing on all cylinders and took the visitors by surprise.

Tied at 2-2, Hughes nailed a trey to put Union on top 5-2 and the Panthers would lead the remainder of the game.

A Greene putback at the buzzer got the Tigers within six at 22-16 after the first quarter. Hughes accounted for 14 of Union's points after nailing three treys in the period.

The Panthers take leads of 26-18 and 28-20 before the Tigers roared back to make it a one-possession game at the half with Union leading 36-33. Hughes went 6-for-6 at the line in the quarter and Ralston Drake chipped in a pair of baskets.

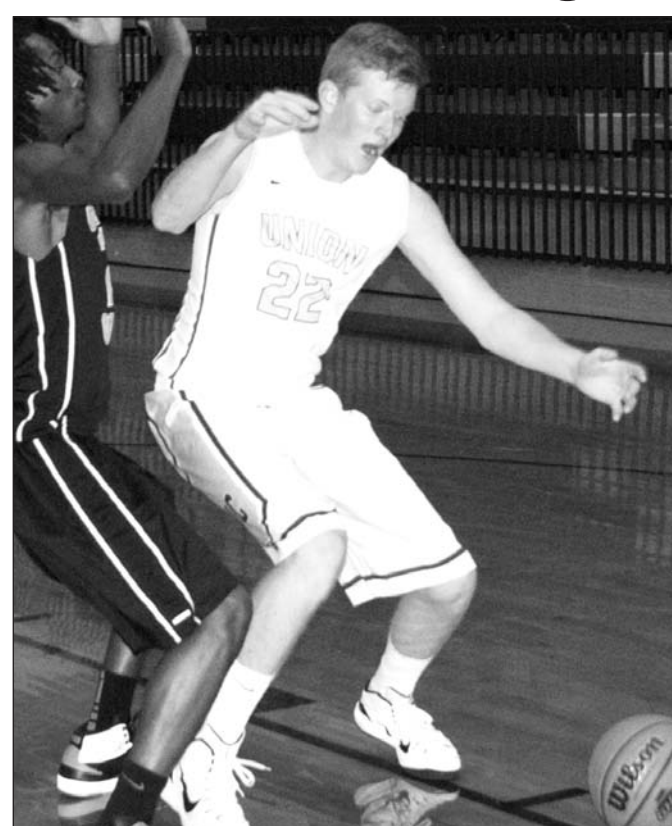
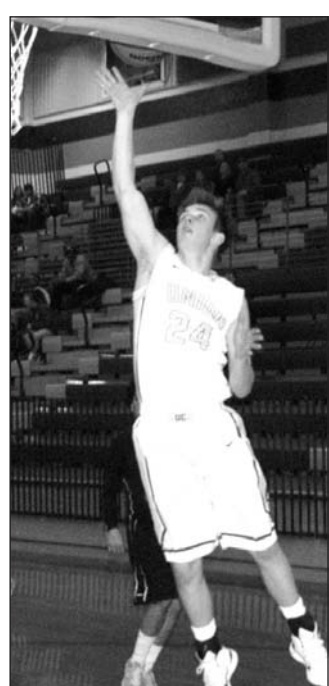
Greene County may have gone into the locker rooms with momentum on its side, but the Panthers quickly stole it back in the third quarter and never let go.

Union opened the third on a 15-3 run that allowed the Panthers to open up a 51-36 lead with 3:28 left in the period.

However, Greene refused to go away and chipped away at the Union lead to get back within single digits at 57-48, entering the fourth. Hughes put up 9 points in the quarter, Odom came alive with 8 points, and Drake added 4 points in the third.

The Panthers had the Tigers on the ropes via a 7-0 run to start the fourth quarter.

Trailing 64-48 with 5:22



Junior Chase Shook battles in the paint during the Greene County game. He scored a career-high 16 vs Polk. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Panthers were led by Hughes' 22 points - 15 coming in the second half when Union was trailing 31-27 entering the third quarter.

SCORING: Hughes 22, Odom 15, Shook 14, Arnick 6, Baenninger 4, Hamby 2, Rogers 2, Brown 1

Panthers 84 Polk County, Tenn 47

Hiawassee - Chase Shook's career-high 16-point performance led Union in an impressive bounce-back performance over Polk County, Tenn. on day three of the BOTS.

Union blew open a 17-16 game after a quarter for a 46-24 lead at the break.

After three quarters, the Panthers led 68-33. At the conclusion, Kyle Hamby was selected to the All Tournament

Panthers 69 White County 76

SCORING: Hamby 19, Shook 15, Odom 12, Baenninger 10, Hughes 7, Brown 4, Rogers 2

On Tuesday, Union hosts Riverside Military Academy at 6 p.m. before facing Rabun County on Friday. The Panthers are looking to end a three-game skid vs Rabun.

On Saturday Washington Wilkes comes to Blairsville looking for revenge after Union knocked the Tigers out of last year's Region Tournament.