

Sports

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Rabun buzzer beater denies Lady Panthers a Region title

Union enters State Tourney as a No. 2 seed; will host Region 7-AA's Darlington on Tuesday if weather permits

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

The 19-6 Lady Panthers will open the 2015 edition of the Class AA State Tournament on their home court - something the Union County ladies haven't accomplished in six years.

While a 19-6 record looks good on paper, Union Coach David Tucker's squad knows they should be 20-5 after suffering a heartbreaking loss to Rabun, 41-39.

Trailing 39-38, the Lady Cats nailed a long trey, just a few steps inside of half court as the buzzer sounded to claim their fourth Region title in the last six years, and take two-of-three from the Lady Panthers on the season.

Union's win over Rabun (16-9) came back on Jan. 30th when the Lady Panthers used a 22-1 run in the second half to erase a 13-point deficit and grab a 55-47 advantage. Union would hold on for the win and force a tie atop the Region 8-AA standings.

Head and shoulders above everyone else in 8-AA but just about dead-even with each other, both squads squashed the remaining teams on the schedule and breezed through the Region Semi Finals to set up the third meeting between Rabun and Union for 8-AA supremacy - the two participants in the title game came as a shock to no one.

When the two teams met in the regular season, both contests came with a playoff-like atmosphere. So when the two teams met 125 miles away with Greene County as the backdrop, the energy levels weren't the same as when Union went to Tiger, or when the Lady Cats visited Blairsville.

However, as soon as the ball went up for the opening tip, both teams brought plenty of intensity, and for the fans that made the 3-hour trip, they witnessed the most thrilling game of the tournament.

Lady Panthers 39



Senior forward Lisa Nalaschi calls for the ball in the paint. Photo/Todd Forrest

Rabun County 41

Greensboro - As has been the case in each meeting between the teams, Union built an early lead in the first half before Rabun turned it on in the third, setting the stage for a thrilling finish.

Early treys from senior Brooke Maddox and junior Layne Colwell helped Union get an early edge at 10-6 after a quarter.

Senior Lisa Nalaschi tallied 6 points in the second and Maddox added 4 points and the Lady Panthers led 20-15 at the half.

The third was all Rabun

as the Lady Cats nailed two treys with four players getting into the scoring column during a 16-point frame that left Union trailing 31-27.

In the final eight minutes, the Lady Panthers came within 1.1 seconds of claiming their second Region crown in six years.

Trailing by two, Colwell came up with a steal that led to Nalaschi nailing a go-ahead trey with 4 seconds left on the clock.

Inbounding from under the hoop, the Lady Cats quickly racked across halfcourt, where they called a timeout with 0.5 seconds left. But after some



Senior Brooke Maddox (12) and sophomore Holly Stroman (right) are first and second on the team in assists. Photo/Todd Forrest

haggling from Rabun Head Coach Dee Dee Dillard, 1.1 seconds were put on the clock.

The pass went to senior guard Riley Chlupacek who's desperation heave was right on the money.

Depending on your loyalties, the finish was either one of the most memorable, or one of the most heartbreaking.

While the Lady Cats were able to connect on a game-winning trey from another area code, the Lady Panthers weren't so lucky with their outside shooting.

Union County lives and dies behind the arc and on that night, the scrappy Lady

Panthers had to find ways to make up for their cold shooting performance.

The final numbers had Union shooting 21 percent (4-for-19) from downtown while connecting on 14 baskets in 48 attempts (29 percent).

The Lady Panthers only shot 10 free throws while connecting on seven - a stark contrast to the 26-for-35 performance from the last meeting. Although, it was similar to the first Union - Rabun meeting where the Lady Panthers attempted four free throws for the entire game at Rabun.

Yes, four free throws. Not a typo.

The Lady Panthers must now regroup after a devastating loss, but with four devastated seniors, if anyone can put their last game in the rearview, it's these Lady Panthers.

After Union lost the first meeting at Rabun, they went on to reel off nine straight wins. Instead of hanging their heads, it's time to take out their frustrations on Darlington.

Now they have a chance to beat up on Darlington, a private school who comes to Blairsville with a 21-7 record who is 6-4 over their last 10 games and 6-4 on the road, while the Lady Panthers are riding an eight game home winning streak.

Weather permitting, tip off is scheduled for 5 p.m. on Tuesday. Come on out and support the Lady Panthers as this is very likely to be their last home game.

SCORING: Nalaschi 16, Maddox 12, Colwell 9, Day 2
REBOUNDING: Nalaschi 10, Colwell 7, Stroman 6, Maddox 5, Day 2. **ASSISTS:** Day 2, Stroman 2, Maddox 2, Colwell 2, Coyne 1 **STEALS:** Maddox 2, Coyne 1, Stroman 1, Colwell 1, **BLOCKS:** Nalaschi 5, Maddox 1

Lady Panthers 43 Oglethorpe County 16

Greensboro - Union made quick of Oglethorpe County after a 12-6 opening frame.

Led by 14 points from Day and 12 from Maddox, the Lady Panthers opened up a 28-12 lead at the break and 35-16 after three.

Union hit seven treys in the first three quarters.

SCORING: Day 14, Maddox 12, Stroman 6, Nalaschi 4, Colwell 3, Lo. Colwell 2, Bailey Daniel 2 **REBOUNDING:** Nalaschi 6, Colwell 5, Day 4, Busse 4, Maddox 2, Coyne 1, Stroman 1 **ASSISTS:** Maddox 7, Stroman 5, Day 2, Colwell 1, **STEALS:** Maddox 4, Nalaschi 2, Stroman 3, Day 3, Colwell 4 **BLOCKS:** Nalaschi 2, Busse 1

Panthers finish third in 8-AA; return to State for second year in-a-row

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Union County Head Coach Casey Jones is two-for-two when it comes to reaching the State Tournament.

In Jones' second year at the helm, he has led the Panthers to their first back-to-back State playoff trips since 2003. Now Jones hopes that he doesn't fall to 0-2 at State.

The Panthers (17-11) ran off and left Oglethorpe County (9-17) by a score of 79-58 after the first three quarters were tight.

On Friday, Union had an opportunity to reach its first Region Championship game since 2001 but came up short against Rabun for their third straight loss this season, and sixth overall to the Wildcats.

However, the Panthers were able to bounce back and claim a playoff win over Washington-Wilkes for the second straight year.

That win gave Union the hat trick vs Wilkes this year and fourth straight win over the Tigers.

The Panthers now turn their attention to Coosa High (20-5) in Rome. The two

teams last met in 2002 when the two teams met in the first round of the Class AA State Tournament.

Union was led by Michael Adams, a future All-Conference guard at Piedmont College, but it wasn't enough to overcome the Eagles' size advantage.

This year, the Panthers are going back to Rome, where they hope to win their first State Playoff game in 14 years.

There is a connection between Union and Coosa, and it's Dade County.

Dade played Towns County twice, collecting two wins, but needing overtime to do it in the first meeting, at Dade. In Dade's last contest with Coosa, Dade was victorious 74-64.

Panthers 79
Oglethorpe County 58

SCORING: Odom 32, Hughes 16, Shook 13, Arnick 7, Drake 6, Colwell 2.

Panthers 78
Wash Wilkes 73

SCORING: Odom 17, Hamby 14, Baeninger 11, Hughes 10, Shook 9, Rogers 8



Senior Tyler Odom scored a career high 32 vs Oglethorpe. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Hunter Hughes vs Rabun County. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Kyle Hamby Photo/Todd Forrest



Junior Lance Rich with a jumper Photo/Todd Forrest

2015 Union County Soccer Schedule			
Friday, February 06, 2015	at Pickens Scrimm	VG 5:00	VB 7:00
Monday, February 23, 2015	at Lumpkin	JVG 5:00	JVB 6:30
Thursday, February 19, 2015	at Pickens	JVG 5:00	JVB 6:30
Tuesday, February 24, 2015	at Rabun	VG 5:00	VB 7:00
Wednesday, February 25, 2015	at Fannin	JVG 5:00	JVB 6:30
Thursday, February 26, 2015	Pickens	JVG 5:00	JVB 6:30
Tuesday, March 03, 2015	Fannin	VG 5:00	VB 7:00
Friday, March 06, 2015	at Washington W	VG 5:30	VB 7:30
Monday, March 09, 2015	Lumpkin	JVG 5:00	JVB 6:30
Tuesday, March 10, 2015	Pickens	VG 5:00	VB 7:00
Wednesday, March 11, 2015	Fannin	JVG 5:00	JVB 6:30
Friday, March 13, 2015	Greene	VG 5:30	VB 7:30
Monday, March 16, 2015	at Swain	VG 4:30	
Friday, March 20, 2015	at Social Circle	VG 5:30	VB 7:30
Monday, March 23, 2015	Towns	VG 5:00	VB 7:00
Friday, March 27, 2015	Rabun	VG 5:00	VB 7:00
Tuesday, March 31, 2015	Gilmer		VB 5:00
Thursday, April 02, 2015	Lumpkin	VG 5:30	VB 7:30
Tuesday, April 14, 2015	at Towns	VG 5:00	VB 7:00
Friday, April 17, 2015	Oglethorpe	VG 5:30	VB 7:30
Monday, April 20, 2015	at Riverside	JVB 4:30	VB 6:00
Wednesday, April 22, 2015	Swain	VG 4:30	