

Sports

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Second scrimmage contest a learning experience for Panthers

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Following Friday night's home scrimmage matchup with Sonoraville High School, Union County Head Coach Brian Allison reminded his team that they still have a long way to go.

And, according to Allison, the Phoenix, from Class AAA, are on a much higher level than the Holy Innocents squad that his squad faced the previous week.

With no official score being kept, the final tally depended on who you asked, and whether they were wearing red or purple.

According to the *Calhoun Times*, the newspaper providing Sonoroaville coverage, the final score was 20-16, in favor of the Phoenix. However, ask anyone from Union County and they will tell you the final score was Sonoraville 17, Union County 16.

The scoring discrepancy boils down to a Phoenix field goal with 7:13 to play in the second quarter.

The first attempt failed when the snap sailed high and the holder tried to take of running, but the play was immediately blown dead, and being a practice game, Sonoraville was allowed another chance and kicker Kevin Villatoro split the uprights from 29 yards out.

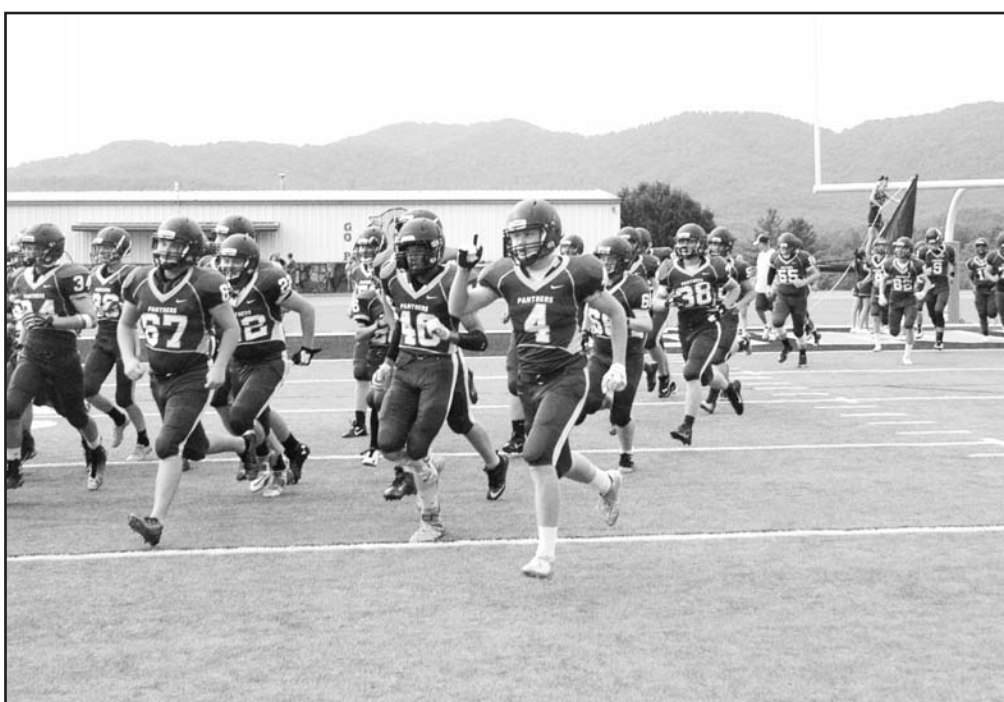
Unfortunately, the Panthers offense, particularly the aerial attack, sputtered during the first half as a result of the Phoenix getting pressure on Union quarterback Joseph Mancuso.

And the senior QB didn't get much help from a receiving corp that combined for seven dropped passes on the night.

"They put some pressure on us in some situations and it hurt us in the passing game," Coach Allison said. "We also had a few drops but (Mancuso) was still 15-for-24 which is (a completion percentage of) about 62-to-63 percent which isn't bad. It's not where we want it to be but it isn't bad."

Union was unable to get on the board until senior Knox Kiernan connected on a 27-yard field goal with 39 seconds remaining in the first half.

The Phoenix offense opened the game at their own 30-yard line and were on the move into Union territory until junior defensive lineman Luke



Senior receiver/kicker Knox Kiernan (4) and the rest of the Panthers take the field. Photo/Todd Forrest



Seniors Chris Drost (54) and Tyler McCoy (14) team up for a sack on Sonoraville quarterback Cody Long. Photos/Todd Forrest

Winkler batted down a first down pass. After a 7-yard carry on second down, Sonoraville was whistled for a false start. Facing a 3rd-and-8, seniors Chris Drost and Tyler McCoy got to the Phoenix's senior quarterback Cody Long. The combined sack resulted in a 7-yard loss and a 4th-and-15.

Senior defensive back Josh Daniel broke up the fourth down pass attempt - giving the ball to Union at their own 30-yard line.

Senior quarterback Joseph

Mancuso quickly went to work, hitting fellow senior Sam Gilbert for a gain of 12 yards. A 3-yard carry by junior running back Bo Lynch and an 9-yard completion to sophomore receiver Cole Wright moved Union into Sonoraville territory.

On first down, a 15-yard pass to Gilbert was brought back due to a penalty.

The flag also resulted in a loss of down so facing 2nd-and-25, Lynch was wrapped up in

the backfield for a 4-yard loss, on 3rd and forever, Gilbert picked up 6-yards with a reception. A delay of game derailed the drive even further and following a 10-yard completion to Gilbert, the Panthers were forced to punt.

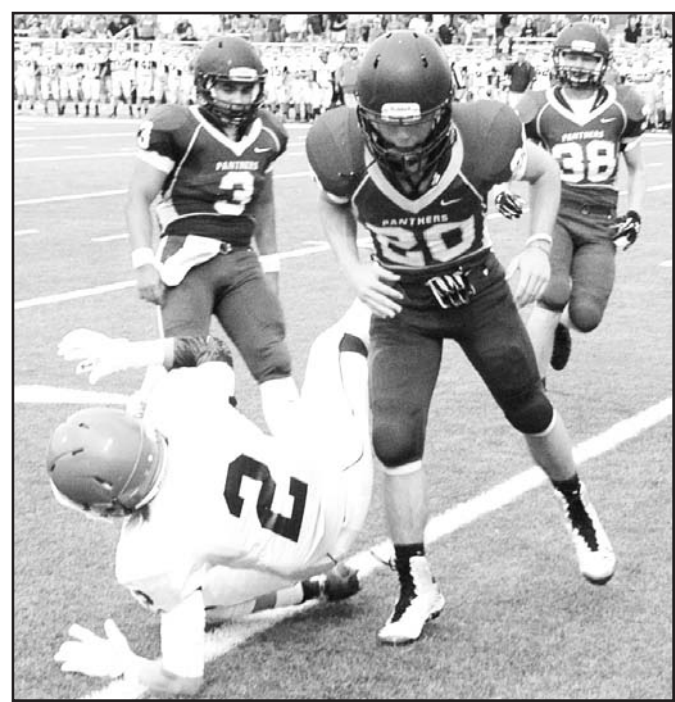
With 5:03 to play in the opening quarter, the Phoenix set up shop at their own 30 and after sacks by Drost and sophomore RJ Banton and a holding call brought on another punt.

Starting at their own 40, Mancuso went back to Gilbert for 12 yards on 2nd-and-10, but a sack and two incompletions followed bringing up another punting situation at the close of the period.

Starting the second frame at their own 39, Sonoraville used rushes of 10, 18, 12 to get inside the Union redzone where the drive stalled at the 12-yard line resulting in two Phoenix field goal attempts, with the second one connecting, thanks to an accurate snap.

The drive also cost the visitors their starting quarterback when Long, a 2014 All Region 6-AAA Honorable Mention selection went down with a leg injury, forcing him to watch the remainder of the game on crutches.

Beginning at their own 30 with 7:13 left before halftime, the Panthers' offense was behind the chains again when they lost 10 yards on a first down sack, two



Senior corner back Josh Daniel (20) breaks up a pass with juniors Nic Rodriguez and Chris Thompson in pursuit. Photo/Todd Forrest

incompletions followed, bringing Banton back on the field to punt the ball away.

"I think our punting situation can be good, we're just not consistent," Coach Allison said. "RJ (Banton) has a good leg - he'll kick it 25-30 yards with no return on it."

Starting at their own 45, the Phoenix, who went on to churn out 233 yards of offense on the ground, carried for 8 yards then 2 yards before losing 10 yards after they were forced to recover their own fumble. Facing 2nd-and-20, Sonoraville gashed Union for a 39-yard run to the 16-yard line. A 12-yard carry and a 4-yard touchdown run off the right tackle followed.

"I don't think we tackled very well and I think that probably hurt us more than anything," Coach Allison said. "Actually, (our run defense) was a little bit better than it looked on Friday night. We were messing around with a different look on the defensive front and we were just out of position in a few situations. We, as coaches, put our kids into some positions that weren't very conducive for success."

With 3:41 to work with in the half, the Panthers' offense was finally able to gain a little traction.

Mancuso spread the ball around to Gilbert, Wright, Kiernan, and junior Slade Thompson to put the home team on the

move. Carries by junior Nic Rodriguez and sophomore Cole Dockrey kept the drive alive. But facing a 4th-and-2, Mancuso hit Kiernan on a seam route that went for 15 yards.

Then Mancuso hooked up with Thompson on consecutive plays - good for 8 yards and 6 yards. An offside penalty gave Union a 1st-and-5 at the Phoenix 13-yard line and Dockrey rushed for 3 yards to make it 2nd-and-2. That's when the drive stalled and Kiernan nailed a 27-yard field goal right before the half.

"I feel pretty confident with our special teams at this point," Coach Allison said. "Knox (Kiernan) has been kicking the ball really well. He put it into the endzone a couple of times on kickoffs and his leg is stronger than it was last year and he's also more accurate."

The second half began with a 5-yard carry and a 5-yard reception by Lynch, then junior Zach Stone took a sweep around the right end for 12 yards. The drive stalled when the Panthers lost yardage recovering their own fumble.

Luckily, Sonoraville coughed up the football and senior safety Andrew Brown pounced on the loose football at midfield. On the ensuing series, Brown was inserted at receiver and reeled in a Mancuso pass.

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Union surges past Fannin; uses long ball in win over Habersham

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

The Lady Panthers added two more to the win column last week following a 10-2 romp over Fannin on Tuesday and a 3-1 victory vs Habersham Central a day later.

After Union County used an 8-run third inning to put away Fannin County, junior Laken Chambers and senior Maddie Garrett went deep during the win over Class AAAAA's Habersham, with Chambers throwing a complete game, three-hitter for her third win of the season.

Lady Panthers 3
Habersham Central 1

Garrett put the Lady Panthers on the board when she sent a 2-2 breaking ball out of the yard to lead off the second inning.

Freshman Aladriel Arnold followed with one of her three hits on the day but Union was unable to do anymore damage.

The Lady Panthers stranded another runner in the bottom half of the third inning after junior Kendra Tanner lined an opposite field double with one out.

The Lady Raiders knotted things up at 1-1 in the fourth when Chambers allowed a lead-off single. A sacrifice bunt, a passed ball, and an error scored the unearned run.

Another sacrifice bunt moved the go-ahead run into scoring position but Chambers induced a two-out grounder to end the inning.

Arnold singled back up the middle with one-out in the fourth for Union's only hit of the inning.

Habersham opened the fifth with a leadoff single to center and a sacrifice bunt advanced the runner to second. However, Chambers was able to record the second out at third when she fired to junior Lydia Arrowood, who applied the tag after a grounder back to the circle. Then Garrett cut down a would-be base stealer at second for the third out of the



Senior Maddie Garrett sends an off speed high over the left field fence vs Habersham Central. Photo/Todd Forrest



Freshman outfielder Aladriel Arnold with one of her three hits on Wednesday. Photo/Todd Forrest

inning.

The Lady Raiders were back in business once again in the top half of the sixth thanks to another leadoff single.

Following a fielders choice, Arrowood snared a line drive and fired to first for the 5-3 double play.

With one out in the bottom of the sixth, Chambers went

deep to left-center to give Union a 2-1 lead.

Garrett followed with an infield single bringing freshman Maddie Sutton in as the courtesy runner.

Arnold lined a base hit to center that brought Sutton around to score for a 3-1 lead.

Chambers sat Habersham down 1-2-3 in the seventh inning



Junior Laken Chambers goes deep during the sixth inning to break a 1-1 tie with Habersham Central. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sophomore first baseman Jillian Lawn covers a bunt and throws the runner out. Photo/Todd Forrest

to secure the win.

Her stat line for the game was 7 innings pitched, 3 hits allowed, with 1 unearned run, while fanning three and not allowing a walk.

At the plate she went 1-for-3 with a solo homer.

Arnold finished 3-for-3 with an RBI single, Garrett was 1-for-3 with a solo homer, Tanner

also went 1-for-3.

Chambers tossed five innings in the win, striking out six, while giving up 5 hits, 2 earned runs, and a walk.

Tanner went 2-for-2 with a triple, 2 runs, 2 walks, and an RBI.

Karley Nix finished 2-for-3 with a double, a run, and 2 RBIs.

The Lady Rebels took advantage of three singles, a walk, and a hit batter to take a 2-0 lead over Union in the top half of the first.

A pair of singles by Tanner and Nix, then a walk by Garrett wasn't enough for the Lady Panthers to put a run on the board in their half of the first.

A pair of Fannin singles in the second wasn't good enough for a run thanks to the right arm of Arnold. The Union left fielder cut down a Lady Rebel base runner at the plate for the third out of the inning.

Union went down in order in the second and Chambers worked around a leadoff hit batter to keep the Lady Panthers within two runs entering the bottom half of the third.

The eight-run third began with an infield single by sophomore Braden Poteete, Tanner followed with a walk, setting the table for a 2-run double by Nix - who later scored on a wild pitch.

Chambers reached on an error, Garrett singled - bringing home courtesy runner Ellie Garrison. Arnold drew a walk and eventually scored on a wild pitch. Lawn singled, Arrowood scored Garrett with a base hit, sophomore Megan Lockaby walked, Poteete singled home Lawn. Tanner drew a bases loaded walk - scoring Arrowood.

With an 8-2 advantage, Chambers sat down Fannin County 1-2-3 in the top half of the fourth.

Union made it a 9-2 game with a run in the bottom of the fourth.

Garrett led off with a walk and was brought home by an Arrowood double.

The Lady Rebels went down in order in the fifth, then in the bottom half of the fifth, Tanner

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Lady Panthers 10
Fannin County 2