

Sports

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Andrews and Hiwassee Dam no match for Tucker's Panthers

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Union County High School's first Glenda Gooch Foundation Tip-Off Tournament couldn't have gone any better for the hosts.

The Panthers took care of business in both games by slamming Andrews, NC 72-21 thanks to a double-double from James Rowe on Monday. Tuesday, Union County dispatched Hiwassee Dam, NC 64-20 with Rhett McCombs and Zach Odom pouring in 37 combined points.

UC 72, Andrews 21: The Panthers ran away from Andrews 30-6 in the second quarter, after holding an 11-1 lead through one quarter for a 41-7 halftime advantage.

Rowe scored 16 of his game-high 18 points in the first half, as the senior forward hit four treys and grabbed 10 boards for a double-double.

A pair of Zach Odom free throws were followed by a trey from Rowe to give Union a 5-0 early lead. Rowe scored again before a pair of foul shots from Zach Odom and McCombs put Union ahead 11-1 after one quarter of action.

A Wildcat trey was answered with a 16-0 run, early in the second quarter as the Panthers sprinted out to a 27-4 advantage. Tyler Odom came off the bench for 9 second quarter points, to go along with 11 from Rowe and 9 from McCombs.

An Andrews free throw made it a 27-5 game with 4:09 to play before the half, but Union sealed the quarter with a 14-2 run.

Five different Panthers got in on the third quarter scoring action, with sophomores Ralston Drake, Hunter Hughes, and Zach Odom tallying 4 points each. Sophomore Kyle Hamby added three, and Rowe chipped in with 2 points. The Panther bench sparked a 14-0 run that lasted well into the



Jordan-esque: Senior guard Zach Odom goes up and under for two.



Senior James Rowe shoots for two in the paint vs Hiwassee Dam
Union County Basketball Photos by Todd Forrest

fourth quarter.

In the mercy-rule shortened fourth quarter, Hughes scored 5 more, Hamby chipped in 4, Drake and sophomore Matthew Wasko each had 2 points.

McCombs finished with 11 points, including two treys while also grabbing 5 rebounds, picking up 3 steals, and dishing out 3 assists.

Zach Odom added 10 points and 3 steals, Drake had 6 points and 7 boards, while CJ Byers added 3 steals and a blocked shot.

Hughes finished with 9 points and Hamby added 7 points for the Panthers. Union has now won its season opener

for the third consecutive season.

UC 64, HD 20: Like the Andrews, NC game, the same scene played out on the second night of the Glenda Gooch Foundation Tip-Off Tournament.

The Panthers bolted out to a 36-10 lead at the half and never looked back thanks to 27 steals by an aggressive Panther full-court defense.

The dynamic backcourt duo of McCombs and Zach Odom combined for 29 of Union's 36 first half points. McCombs finished with 23 points – more than the entire Hiwassee Dam team.



The UCHS Pit Crew has returned in full force for the new season.



Dylan Coyne battles in the paint
Union County Basketball Photos by Todd Forrest



Rhett McCombs lays in two points.



Coach David Tucker

and blocked two shots.

Union County Head Coach David Tucker still sees room for improvement after the blowout wins.

"We're standing around too much," he said. "They began taking it to the hole and playing pretty physical with us. The referees did the best they could. I'm just glad I wasn't calling the game. But we're going to come in here over the holidays and work and keep practicing, go to Andrews on Tuesday and be ready for the weekend."

As for the weekend, Union County will turn its attention to a pair of non-region contests following the trip to Andrews, NC on Tuesday.

The Panthers then face its two arch-rivals, Fannin County and Towns County.

The Rebels travel to Blairsville on Friday as the Panthers look to extend their winning streak over the Blue and Grey to five games.

Saturday, Union visits Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium where Union hasn't lost since the Bill Clinton administration in December of 1999. The Panthers will go for their 29th straight victory over the Indians – dating back to February 2000.

Last season the Panthers defeated Towns in Hiwassee, 63-49.

On Tuesday, Dec. 4th, the Panthers will host the White County Warriors. Union split with White County last season, taking the game in Blairsville, 58-48 after dropping a two-point buzzer-beater to the Warriors in the first meeting.

Lady Panthers crush Andrews, fend off rally from Hiwassee Dam

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The Lady Panthers picked up two victories last week during the Glenda Gooch Foundation Tip-Off Tournament.

In the first game, Union was led by 20 points from Lauren Zollinger as the Lady Panthers used a 21-2 second frame to dispose of the Lady Wildcats, 56-22.

The second game wasn't quite as one-sided as Union held off a young Hiwassee Dam squad for a 55-52 win. Sophomore Brooke Maddox poured in 20 points off the bench in just her second varsity game.

UC 56, Andrews 52: Union County trailed 6-3 with 5:19 to play in the first quarter before exploding with a 35-2 run.

Following the early deficit, Madison Rich, Hannah Hughes, Shawna Brown, and Jeanelle Arnold each scored to give Union an 11-6 lead after a quarter.

Brown, Hughes, and Arnold opened the scoring onslaught in the second quarter to give Union an 18-6 lead with 6 minutes to play before the half.

An Andrews basket at the 5:05 mark was the last they would see for a while.

Maddox scored 2 and Zollinger hit back-to-back treys and a Carly Adams bucket put the Lady Panthers ahead 28-8 with 2 minutes before the half.

Forty seconds later, Maddox nailed a trey from the wing, getting fouled in the process. The sophomore stepped to the line and sank the free throw resulting in a 4-point play.

Union continued to cruise in the second half as Zollinger drove for 2 on the first two Lady Panther possessions of the half. Arnold turned a steal into a lay-up to give Union a 30-point cushion, 38-8 with 6:33 left in the third quarter.

Zollinger would score 11 in that third frame and Union took a football-like, 48-14 score into the fourth quarter.

Lisa Nalaschi and Allie Stroman chipped in 4 each in the final frame with Nalaschi



Shawna Brown and Carly Adams win the scramble for a loose ball.



Lauren Zollinger fires a three.



Jeanelle Arnold with a jumper.



Carly Adams after a steal during the second half vs. Andrews, NC.



Brooke Maddox from deep.



Hannah Hughes connects for two

blocking 4 shots and grabbing 6 boards.

The Lady Panthers had 10 different players score with Zollinger getting 20 points and 3 steals.

Arnold finished with 8 points, 5 rebounds, and four steals. Meanwhile, Maddox had 6 points and 6 rebounds, with 5 boards coming from the offensive glass.

Adams scored 2 points but assisted 5 times, Brown had 4 points and 4 boards, Hannah Hughes added 4 points and 3 steals and Ariel Maurer also had 3 steals.

UC 55, HD 52: Union County made its 3-point half-time advantage stick as they held off a tenacious Lady Eagle squad to close out the Glenda Gooch Foundation Tip-Off Tournament.

The Lady Panthers never trailed throughout the game and twice opened up an 11-point advantage during the third quarter and again in the fourth quarter.

Hiwassee Dam stormed back to within 2 points at 52-50 with 15 seconds to play but Zollinger and Maurer put the game away from the charity stripe.

"That was a good win and I will take it," Coach Tucker said.

Hughes opened the game red-hot, scoring 8 of Union's first 10 points of the contest to give the Lady Panthers a 10-7 lead.

Maddox would connect twice from beyond the arc to close the opening period with Union leading 16-12.

Maddox would open the second frame in similar fashion, scoring the first four Lady Panther points of the quarter.

Two baskets by Adams gave Union some breathing room at 24-17 before a Hiwassee Dam trey made it a four-point game. Maddox hit two more from the line with 7 seconds left but the Lady Eagles nailed a trey at the buzzer for a 26-23 Union County lead entering the locker rooms.

Adams opened the second half with a 3-pointer but again Hiwassee Dam clawed its way back to within a point at 29-28 at the 5:28 mark of the third.

The Lady Panthers would respond with an 11-1 run sparked by a pair of free-throws from Zollinger and a bucket by Maddox. Maurer got in on the run with a basket before a trey from Maddox and a bucket from

Zollinger capped off the run.

Leading 42-31 entering the final frame, the Lady Eagles scored 10 seconds in to get within single digits but Hughes quickly answered back, giving Union a 44-33 lead at the 7:39 mark of the fourth quarter.

Two more free throws from Hughes offset a Hiwassee Dam score and Union maintained its 11-point cushion with 6:30 to play.

A Lady Eagle free-throw was followed by consecutive buckets to cut the Lady Panther lead to 46-40 but Zollinger ended the spurt with a bucket at the 4:15 mark.

Hiwassee Dam cut back into the Union lead, making it a 48-42 game with 3:46 remaining.

That's when Coach Tucker went to his patented stall-

offense.

Union melted nearly a minute off the clock before the Lady Eagles began fouling. Maddox went 1-for-2 at the line stretching the lead to 7 at 49-42.

Two quick buckets by Hiwassee Dam made it a 49-46 game with 1:27 to play.

The Lady Panthers turned it over on their next possession but the defense forced a stop and Hughes hit two free throws to give Union a 51-46 edge with 68 seconds left.

Following another Lady Eagle basket, Zollinger hit a free throw for a 52-48 lead but Hiwassee Dam refused to go away and scored with 15 ticks left on the clock and Union's lead was suddenly trimmed to two points. Zollinger would again step to the stripe and hit her first attempt for a 53-50 score. The junior's second attempt was no good but Maurer's offensive board on the miss sent Union back to the line. Maurer would sink them both to preserve Union's victory.

"We did a really good job defensively," Coach Tucker said. "We just need to do a better job with our guards. This is the first time we've been in a game like that. We let the scrimmage game get away from us at the end but at least we held on and won tonight."

Hughes had 14 points and 4 boards, Zollinger finished with 8 points, Adams went for 7 points and 8 assists, and Maurer had 4 points and a game-high 6 blocks.

After traveling to Andrews on Tuesday, Union County now hosts Fannin County on Friday before going to Towns County on Saturday.

Union will look to extend its winning streak over the Lady Rebels to four games – the longest since the mid-1980's.

Saturday, the Lady Panthers will visit Towns in front of an always hostile crowd.

Union split its two meetings with Towns last season, ending a 5-game losing skid to the Lady Indians.

"We know that Towns will be ready for us," Coach Tucker said. "But we'll be ready to play too."