

Sports

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Panthers end nine years of frustration with win over Dawson

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Two technical fouls, one intentional foul, plenty of trash talking on the court, and taunting from both student sections.

Union must be hosting Dawson County.

Trailing 38-34 early in the third quarter, senior Kyle Hamby, who was the focus of Dawson's student section, quickly silenced the visitors by sparking the Panthers' 24-6 run that provided Union a 58-44 advantage entering the fourth quarter.

"Who knows what they were saying," Hamby said after the game, "it's just good to beat Dawson."

In the fourth, Hunter Hughes and Tyler Odom continued to torch Dawson's match-up-zone defense and Union outscored the Tigers 11-4 to open the final frame, and from there, cruised to a 76-54 victory over a Dawson squad that has been a thorn in Union's side for close to 10 years.

In fact, the Panthers last home win over Coach Thad Burgess' Tigers came in February of 2006 - almost nine years ago.

From 2007-2011, Dawson won 11-straight over the Panthers before the skid was halted in Dawsonville in January 2011.

However, the Panthers were unable to knock off the Tigers in the rematch in Blairsville. Dawson went on to sweep the Panthers the following season and moved up to Class AAA with 15 wins in its last 17 games vs Union County - who went through three different coaches during that span.

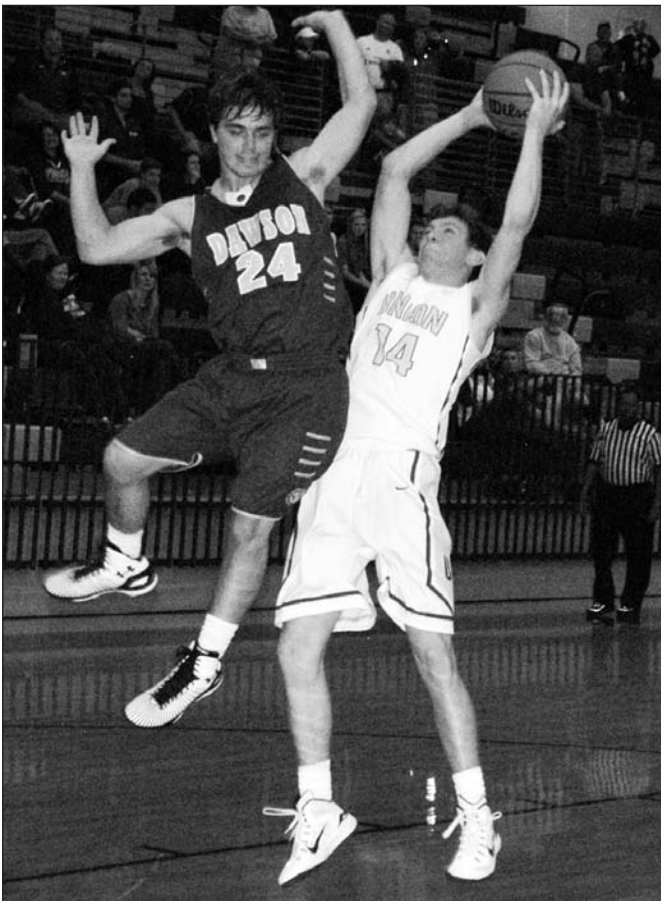
Entering last week's contest, Dawson was coming off a blowout loss at Rabun County and came to Blairsville ripe for the taking.

After leading much of the first half, Union let its lead slip away late in the second quarter, thanks in most part to a dismal 5-for-15 performance from the foul line in the half.

Trailing 32-31 at the half, Union County Assistant Coach Kevin Hughes was



Kyle Hamby with a breather in the fourth quarter. His 11 third quarter points helped Union open up a double-digit lead. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Tyler Odom goes up strong in the first half for two of his 21 points on the night. Photo/Todd Forrest

gives a technical foul during the break, and the Tigers hit one from the line to open the third with a 33-31 advantage.

The lead would stretch to 35-31 before a Hunter Hughes three cut the deficit to one.

Dawson responded with a three of its own at the 6:37 mark to

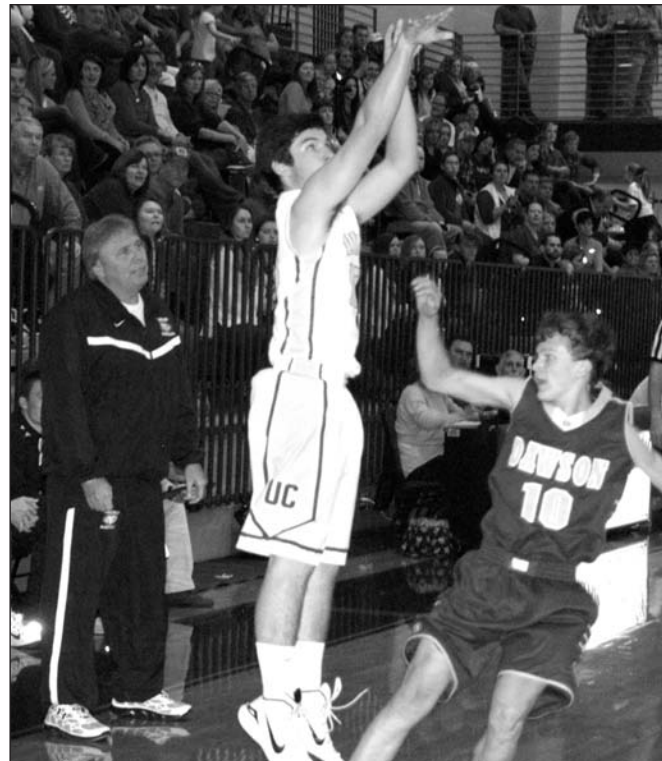
take a 38-34 lead. A put back by Odom and then a Tiger free throw made it a 39-36 game with just under 6:00 left in the third.

It would be all Hamby for the remainder of the quarter.

Union's senior guard single-handedly outscored the



Senior guard Hunter Hughes drives into the teeth of the Tiger defense. He finished with 21 points. Photo/Todd Forrest



Dawson Coach Thad Burgess watches helplessly as his defense is slow to react to an open Lake Arnick, who drills a trey. Photo/Todd Forrest

Tigers 11-5 over the final 5:46 of the frame.

Hamby connected from downtown to knot the game at 39-39 but Dawson answered with another three. Odom tied things back up after driving to the rim for two and drawing the foul. The 3-point play made it

a 42-42 game and the Panthers never trailed again.

A steal by Hamby resulted in a break away lay up by Odom and Union regained the lead at the 4:55 mark of the quarter.

Hamby increased the lead with a short jumper at

the 3:59 mark and two from the stripe by Hunter Hughes stretched the Panthers' lead to 48-42.

With a verbal onslaught from the Dawson students directed his way, Hamby stuck two daggers in the backs of the visitors.

The first one came on an NBA-range trey - giving Union its largest lead of the game at 51-42. Moments later, Hamby silenced the Tiger fans for good with a pull up, transition three - stretching the lead to a dozen at 54-42.

With 1:26 left in the third, sophomore Lawson Baenninger was perfect at the foul line - keeping the lead at 12. Junior Andrew Brown hit the offensive glass and scored, giving the Panthers a 58-44 advantage after three quarters.

The final frame opened with another dagger three, this time it was Odom, who led the team with seven fourth quarter points.

The Union senior added two from the stripe at the 5:36 mark to stretch the Panthers' lead to 63-44. Hunter Hughes drove into the paint for a pair of buckets followed by two more Odom free throws for a 69-48 score at the 3:53 mark.

Baenninger added two free throws and with 2:05 to play, and then a Dawson player received a technical foul. Hunter Hughes hit 1-of-2 at the line, sophomore Luke Watson added a bucket in the paint, and freshman Crawford Colwell wrapped up the Panthers' scoring with 1-of-2 from the stripe.

In the early going, the Panthers jumped out to a quick 5-0 advantage after a deuce from Hughes and a trey by Odom.

Two free throws from senior Ralston Drake made it 7-3. Odom went 1-for-2 at the line then connected on a bucket at the 4:00 mark to make it a 10-5 Union lead.

Senior Lake Arnick hit two from the charity stripe then nailed a corner trey. Hughes hit 1-of-2 from the foul line and his Panthers held a 16-8 advantage with 1:41 left in the first.

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Physical Lady Tigers dominate the boards, hold off Union 59-47

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

The Dawson County Lady Tigers' senior front-court duo of Ashley Parker and Sheyenne Seabolt combined for 36 boards and out-rebounded the entire Lady Panther team 36-24.

Despite the disparity in rebounding, Union County was able to hang around until the final minutes.

The Lady Tigers, who reached the Class AAA Sweet 16 last season, and the Final Four in 2013, were fresh off a win over another 8-AA team at Rabun County when they rolled into Blairsville.

Late in the third quarter, the Lady Tigers were able to distance themselves from Union when they opened up a 42-29 lead.

But the Lady Panthers chipped away to open the fourth. Junior Kim Coyne connected from long distance and sophomore Holly Stroman hit a 15-footer and Union was within five at 49-44 with 5:51 to play.

Trailing 51-44, senior Lisa Nalasci drove the baseline and connected on a reverse layup bringing the Lady Panthers back within five.

Unfortunately, that would be Union's final field goal of the game as the final 4:30 belonged to Dawson, who went back to their bread-and-butter and scored six unanswered points - all coming in the paint.

A free throw from Nalasci at the 1:36 mark was Union's final point of the game and first since her reverse lay up with 5:12 to play.

Although, in the early going, it was the Lady Tigers' deadly three-point shooting that staked them to a 23-13 and a 28-18 advantage in the second quarter.

Right out of the gates, Dawson nailed a pair of threes sandwiched around four points from Nalasci.



Senior Kaitlyn Day looks for room after grabbing a Dawson County miss. Photo/Todd Forrest

They connected from long distance again - stretching the Lady Tigers' lead to 11-4. Senior Kaitlyn Day drove the baseline for two and junior Layne Colwell went 1-of-2 at the line trim the Dawson lead to 11-7.

Later in the period, with her team down 13-7, Stroman was fouled as she went back up on an offensive board resulting in another 1-of-2 trip at the line. Later, senior Brooke Maddox went strong to the basket for two more and Day hit a trey from the wing to tie things up at 13-13.

Dawson would extend its lead back to three with a trey to end the first quarter with a 16-13 lead.

The Lady Tigers rattled off seven unanswered points to open up a 23-13 lead with 5:50 to play before halftime.

Maddox ended the run with a jumper off a feed from senior Madison Lariscy. Moments later, Colwell connected from the corner to cut the Dawson lead to five at 23-18.

Once again, the Lady Tigers had an answer. This time it was a 5-0 spurt to re-



Kim Coyne

gain a double-digit lead at 28-18. But on Union's ensuing possession, Colwell banked in a trey and with 29 seconds left in the half, Dawson added a deuce to take a 30-21 lead into the half.

After a Dawson basket to open the half made it 32-21, Day hit from downtown.



Lisa Nalasci moves into position for an offensive board as Brooke Maddox shoots. Photo/Todd Forrest

before a Coyne field goal and a Nalasci free throw made it 42-32 at the 2:10 mark of the third. With 1:33 left in the quarter, Colwell nailed another trey - this time from the top of the key.

After Colwell made it a seven-point game, Dawson extended its lead back to 13 at 49-36 until a Stroman three in the final minute kept Union within 10 entering the final frame.

On Tuesday, the Lady Panthers will host the Lady Rebels at 6 p.m.

The two teams split last year with Fannin ending Union's six-game winning streak in the series.

The Lady Rebels will come to Blairsville with a 2-2 record with wins coming over Copper Basin TN, 52-31 and Pickens County, 55-52. The two losses came to Gilmer County, 46-37 and Hiwassee Dam NC, 58-43.

On Friday, Union County will look for its fifth straight over Towns County - something the Lady Panthers haven't accomplished since the early 90's.

The Lady Indians are currently sporting a 1-2 re-

cord with a 46-40 win at Lumpkin and a pair of one-sided losses to Banks County, 68-20 and Dade County, 67-34.

At Banks, sophomore Kristen Henson led Towns with 7 points and senior Misty Lindemuth had 4 points.

At Lumpkin, junior Savannah Dyer scored 15 and sophomore Madison Landress and Lindemuth had 7 points each. Junior Jocelyn Byers finished with 6 points and senior Madison Johnson added 5 points.

At Dade, senior Karlie Albach scored 11, sophomore Makenzie Carroll had 5 points, Byers, Johnson, and Lindemuth had 3 points each. Dyer, Henson, and Landress scored 2 points each.

Union County stats (vs Dawson County):

POINTS: Colwell 14, Nalasci 10, Day 8, Stroman 6, Coyne 5, Maddox 4, REBOUNDS: Stroman 5, Colwell 5, Day 4, Maddox 4, Nalasci 4, Coyne 2, ASSISTS: Maddox 6, Stroman 4, Coyne 2, Lariscy 2, STEALS: Nalasci 3, Coyne 2, Maddox 2, Lariscy 1, Colwell 1, BUSSE 1 BLOCKS: Nalasci 1



Madison Lariscy