

# Sports

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## Lady Panthers use 10 treys to score second straight win vs Towns

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**Hiawassee** - With more than 1,000 high school basketball wins between the two, Union County Head Coach David Tucker and Towns County Head Coach Jim Melton found themselves in another Purple and Blue chess match at Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium on Saturday.

Both teams went into the contest handicapped by injured senior point guards. Union County is still without reigning Region 8-AA Player of the Year Lauren Zollinger, and the Lady Indians have been forced into action without the services of First Team Region 8-A selection Eryn Cochran. But neither squad did the classic rivalry any injustice - leaving it all on the floor in a 49-43 Union County victory.

The Lady Panthers hit 10 threes and improved to 4-0 as they hopped on the back of juniors Brooke Maddox and "Lefty" Kaitlyn Day, to defeat Towns County in consecutive games for the first time in nearly five years.

The junior duo provided 35 of Union's 49 points.

After Union knocked down 11 treys and defeated Towns by six in 2012's Battle of the States Semi-Final, Tucker's offense seems to have found a groove against the Lady Indians' 1-3-1 defense. Although, Tucker admits that his offense has stayed the same, and he's simply been blessed with hot shooters in the last two match-ups.

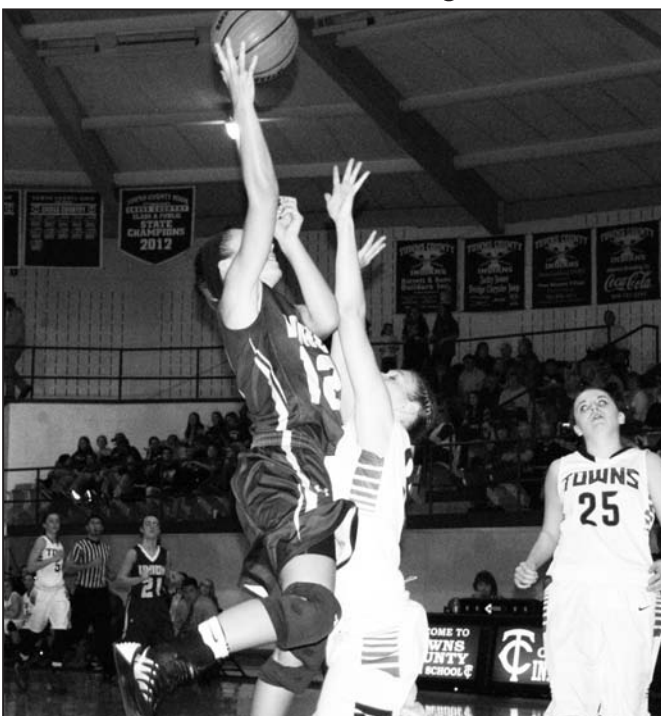
"My zone offense is the same no matter what: shooters shoot," Coach Tucker said. "We were able to just shoot the ball well (in the two wins)."

In the fourth quarter, Day connected on three consecutive treys, opening up a 41-37 Union lead with 3:57 to play. Two came from the corner before the Lady Indians could adjust. With Towns smothering the corner-trey, Day was freed up at the top and stuck a dagger-trey in the back of the Lady Indians.

"Kaitlyn doesn't like to play up top, but against their 1-3-1, shooters shoot," Coach Tucker said. "But when she found out where she wanted to go, I knew we were in good shape."

Maddox would put away the Lady Indians with a lay in off an inbounds pass and three late free throws.

Anyone who has been



Brooke Maddox drives for two in the fourth. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Union bench realizing that victory is near. Photo/Todd Forrest

around Union County basketball over the last four years knows what Coach Tucker will do with a late lead, and that's exactly how the final minutes played out. The Lady Panthers held the ball forcing Towns to foul.

"You know how I am, I like to hold the ball," Coach Tucker said.

Maddox was sent to the line and knocked down two clutch 1-and-1 free throws with 53 seconds to play. Towns made it 47-43 with 32 seconds left but missed a desperation three with 15 seconds left that sealed the deal. Maddox and Day added a free throw each in the final 13 ticks, to fittingly seal the Union County victory.

Towns County, who was the 4th ranked public school in Class A, dropped to 4-2 after being shocked 54-50 at Lakeview Academy on Friday night.

Maddox led the way with a game-high 18 points and Day was close behind with 17.

But before Maddox and Day could find their groove, senior Madison Rich kept Union in the contest early as Towns tried to finish off the Lady Panthers in the first half.

Trailing 7-3 in the first quarter, junior Lisa Nalascchi connected from downtown, Rich knocked down a corner trey to tie things up. Maddox hit from 15-feet and Nalascchi went to work inside for two more and Union led 13-9.

A pair from the line and a late trey by Towns' 8-A Player of the Year, junior Stephanie Patton, gave the home team a 14-13 lead after one.

However, Rich and fellow senior Allie Stroman led a swarming Union defense on Patton, who was coming off games of 27 and



Towns unsuccessfully tried to keep Day in check. Photo/Todd Forrest



Madison Rich applies the pressure on Patton. Photo/Todd Forrest

24 points, and was held in check with a season low 18 points.

"Madison, Brooke, Allie, and everyone played hard on the defensive end and we're continuing to get better," Coach Tucker said.

The second quarter saw the Lady Indians begin to put some distance between themselves and the visitors. Coach Melton's squad began to attack Union County's defense with dribble penetration resulting in two from the stripe, two layups, and put the Lady Panthers' starting center, junior Ariel Maurer into foul trouble.

19-13 Towns. Timeout Union. Tucker's move.

The teams would play to a standstill for the next 1:25 until Rich came through with another run-killing trey. Two Towns free throws later, Union went to its lefty.

Day found her range with

1:28 to play in the half, getting to her sweet spot in the corner. The Lady Indians responded, as they did all night, with two more from the line by senior Kelsie Cowart and a bucket by junior Misty Lindemuth making it a 26-19 game at the break.

"We had some bad breaks go our way but we didn't let it snowball," Coach Tucker said.

Twenty seconds into the third, Rich nailed another three, Maddox picked the pocket of senior Bailey Sutton for a quick score. At the 7:00 mark, Maddox got herself open at the top of the key and found all net - tying the game at 27-27 before most Lady Indian fans were back in their seats after the halftime break.

Timeout Towns.

"Brooke does a great job on both ends," Coach Tucker said. "She broke the press over and over."

Both defenses clamped

down and neither team could break the tie until the 3:34 mark when the Lady Indians went to junior Madison Johnson to regain the lead. Maddox tied it back up at 29-29 with two from the line. During the scoreless drought, Union lost Maurer, the team leader in blocked shots, to five fouls at the 5:09 mark.

According to Tucker, when Maurer fouled out, Rich was forced to play out of position.

"That meant that Madison had to throw it in, and she's supposed to playing up top with Brooke and Kaitlyn."

Trailing 31-29 and the contest slowly grinding into a battle of wills. The Lady Panthers started to sense that victory was only a few made shots away. Day came free at the top of the arc and knocked down a trey, yet a bucket each by Cowart and Sutton left Union trailing at 35-32 after three.

Despite giving up the quick spurt and getting dominated on the offensive boards, the Lady Panthers were able to keep Towns out of its full-court pressure defense, up-and-down style of play. Playing out of rhythm with a young Lady Panthers' team still hanging around, the pressure continued to mount on the Lady Indians.

The fourth quarter began with another stalemate. Until Towns forgot about Day. A devastating miscue.

"I knew if 'Lefty' found it we'd have a chance," Coach Tucker said. "But we had a lot of girls step up and do a good job. Anytime we can win on the road it's a good thing for us."

After all the blood, sweat, and tears, Rich finished with 9 points on three treys and Nalascchi had five to round out the Lady Panther scoring.

Maddox had 5 steals and Maurer and Nalascchi blocked two shots each.

"Once we play under control and get more playing time, we'll be alright," Tucker said.

When asked how Union will be able to build off this win, Tucker responded with a laugh, "one game at a time," he said.

"Towns County is a great team and a great program," he added. "Once they get their point guard, Cochran back, and we get Lauren back, both of us will be as good as anybody. It's a shame that both of them are out but you still gotta play no matter what happens, and hey, it's a great win for us."

## Panthers rough up Towns; extend series win streak to 31 games

By Todd Forrest  
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After escaping Andrews, NC with a win over physical Wildcat squad, Union fell to Lumpkin but answered with a 51-25 win at Towns County.

After the first three minutes at Towns, Union was able to pull away with a 7-0 run, taking a 13-6 lead after one. Junior Kyle Hamby sank a three at the buzzer to spark the Panthers entering the second quarter.

The Panthers used a 15-5 second quarter to put the Indians into a 28-11 hole at the break.

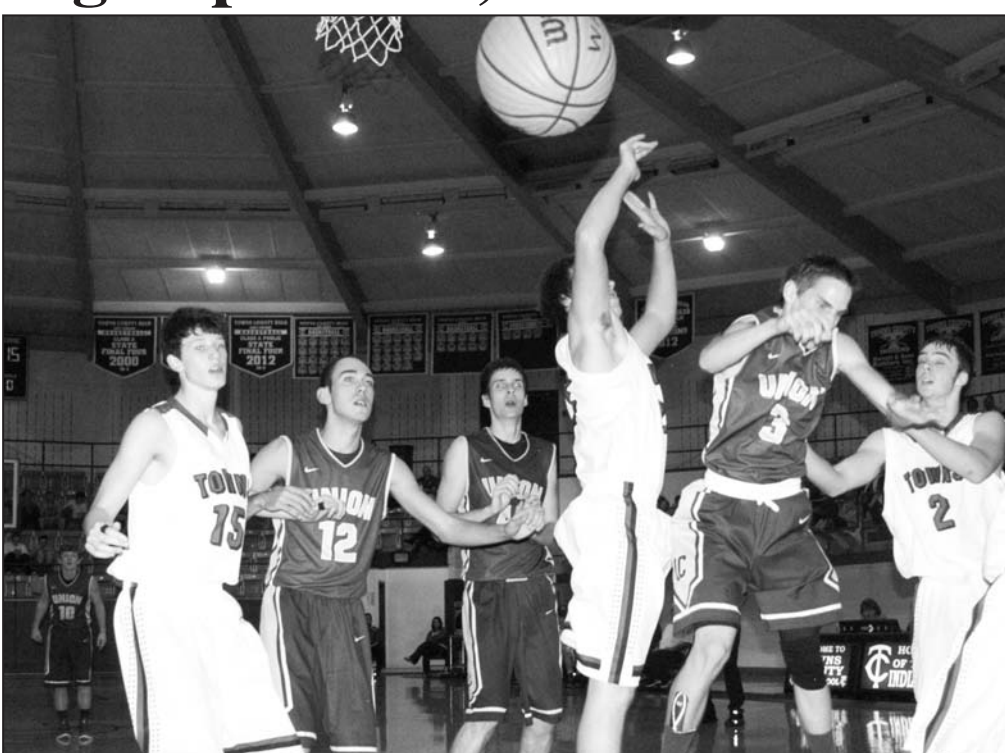
Nine different Panthers scored in the first two quarters.

Union continued to use a balanced scoring attack in the second half.

Elijah Ryals, Dylan Coyne, Tyler Odom, Lake Arnick, Hunter Hughes, and Hamby continued to pace Union through the third - taking a 47-22 advantage entering the fourth.

The Panthers played keep away for the better part of the final 8 minutes in a low-scoring final frame.

Coyne led the Panthers with 8 points. Hughes and Arnick finished with 7 each.



Dylan Coyne, Thomas Danek, and Elijah Ryals battle in the paint vs Towns County. Photo/Todd Forrest

Hamby had 5 points ahead of six different Panthers with four each. Ryals, Odom, Ralston Drake, Matthew Wasco, Thomas Drake, and Grant Schuette all finished with four a piece.

Despite a 3-1 record, Union

County Head Coach Casey Jones is still looking at the big picture. He feels that this young team is a work in progress.

"We're trying to find that fine line between playing fast and hurrying," Jones said.

"Sometimes we hurry and there is a difference between playing fast and rushing. Tonight we were patient, in spurts, but at other times we weren't."

"I told the guys this is game four. Hopefully by game 12, game



Ralston Drake and Grant Schuette (left) were dominant on the boards all game long at Towns County. Photo/Todd Forrest

15, game 20, we're going to find that line. But it's still early and I'm proud of my guys tonight."

Tuesday Union travels to Lumpkin, on Friday the Panthers head south again, this time to Cleveland to take on the Warriors of White County. Union has won

four of the last five meetings

The week concludes with another rivalry game with Fanning County at 6 p.m. The Panthers have won seven straight over the Rebels. Fanning's only win this season thus far, was a 59-52 victory over Hiwassee Dam, NC.

## Union County's Pride of the Mountains Band congratulates seniors



We would like to thank all of the graduating seniors for all of their hard work. We wish you great success in your future. Thank you to Mr. Stafford, Mr. Roberts, and Mr. Rittenhouse for the years of hard work and leadership. N(Dec-11,21)JCA



Blue Ridge Mountain Jeepers had a remarkable November, although many of our regular riders departed for the warmer climates of Florida and southern Texas.

In addition to sharing weekly dinners at local restaurants, we generally go on several monthly Jeep rides. This past month we ventured into the wilds for a cookout.

We left an overcast Blairsville at 10 a.m. and took a forestry road to the Hiwassee Power Plant and Suspension Bridge, which is quite interesting. We continued our back road ride to Lost Creek Campground in Tennessee.

Upon reaching our destination alongside a wide creek, the sun made its appearance, and we enjoyed the lovely day. We ate hot dogs, sausages and marshmallows roasted over an open fire and topped it all off with slices of delicious, home-made pumpkin roll. We shared hours of laughter and tales of adventure before heading home. What a wonderful day it was!

Those of us still in town are looking forward to riding in the Blairsville Christmas Parade

in our individually decorated Jeeps. We enjoyed throwing candy to the children during the Sorghum Festival Parade, so we voted to participate in this Christmas community tradition.

If you have a Jeep and are interested in joining our group, come and meet us. Our monthly meetings are held every second Tuesday at Steve's Steakhouse Restaurant. We eat dinner together at 5:30 and have a short meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.

NT(Dec-11,21)JCA

## YHC basketball doubleheader will benefit Union and Towns Food Banks

Young Harris College Athletics recognizes the Towns County Cooperative Ministries at Flagler College vs. Young Harris College Basketball Doubleheader on Saturday, December 14: Women 1:30 p.m., Men 3:30 p.m. \$6 Adults, \$3 Children/Students.

All the ticket proceeds from the basketball doubleheader will go to the Towns County Food Pantry for Towns County residents & Ninth District Opportunity, and Union County Food Bank for Union County residents. NT(Dec-11,21)JSH