

Sports

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Panthers unable to hold on at East Hall; snow cancels weekend games

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Rabbittown - While the Panthers remained winless all-time against the East Hall Vikings, they became the first team since 2001-02 to finish within 15 points at East Hall, and the first in the last 30-plus years to hold a second-half lead over the Vikings.

Unfortunately, the Panthers suffered a major setback in the first quarter when leading scorer Lawson Baenninger went down with an ankle injury and didn't return.

According to Panthers Head Coach Casey Jones, Baenninger is expected to be sidelined for three weeks.

Playing shorthanded, Union County took a 40-34 lead into the break in front of a shocked crowd in Valhalla last Tuesday evening before the Vikings stormed back for a 54-50 advantage after three. The final frame was all East Hall as four different Panthers fouled out and the home team pulled away for a 79-64 victory.

Union finished with four players in double-digits and got 21 combined points from its two freshmen - Sawyer Drake (11) and Pierson Allison (10). The Panthers were led in scoring by juniors Crawford Colwell and RJ Banton, who each scored 13.

Banton and Colwell combined for 11 of Union's 17 points in the first period as they led by one after one. Allison and Drake poured in 8 points each in the second as the Panthers took a six-point lead into the intermission.

Junior Cole Davis con-



Juniors RJ Banton (pictured) and Crawford Colwell led Union with 13 points each at East Hall, last Tuesday. Photo/Todd Forrest

nected on Union's only trey of the night during a second frame where the Panthers put up 23 points on the Vikings.

The third quarter saw Union begin to cool off as junior Cole Wright and Banton led the team with 4 points each, while Crawford Colwell added two.

Wright, Allison, Drake, and junior guard Riley Barrett all fouled out in the final frame, leaving Crawford Colwell and Banton as the only starters on the floor. Crawford Colwell would score five in the fourth, Allison, Banton and Davis had two each and Drake had three.

Davis finished with 5 points, Wright had four, senior Parker McCombs scored all three of his points in the first, Barrett and Baenninger added two, while Candler Colwell

had 1 point.

The Panthers were scheduled to visit Lumpkin County on Friday, then host Hayesville, NC on Saturday but both games were canceled and will be rescheduled for later in the season.

Union was scheduled to host Dawson County on Tuesday but as of the Monday newspaper deadline, the status of that game was still up in the air.

On Friday, the Panthers will visit Fannin County in a rematch from last month - a 56-34 Union victory.

The final regular season game is scheduled for Feb. 3 but a 3-week timetable for Baenninger would set his return for the North Hall game on Jan. 24th or East Hall at home on Jan. 27th.

Ice cold second half dooms Lady Panthers in 42-21 loss at East Hall

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Rabbittown - A sluggish second half damaged the Lady Panthers bid for their first road win in Region 7-AAA as East Hall pulled away in a 42-21 victory in Valhalla last week.

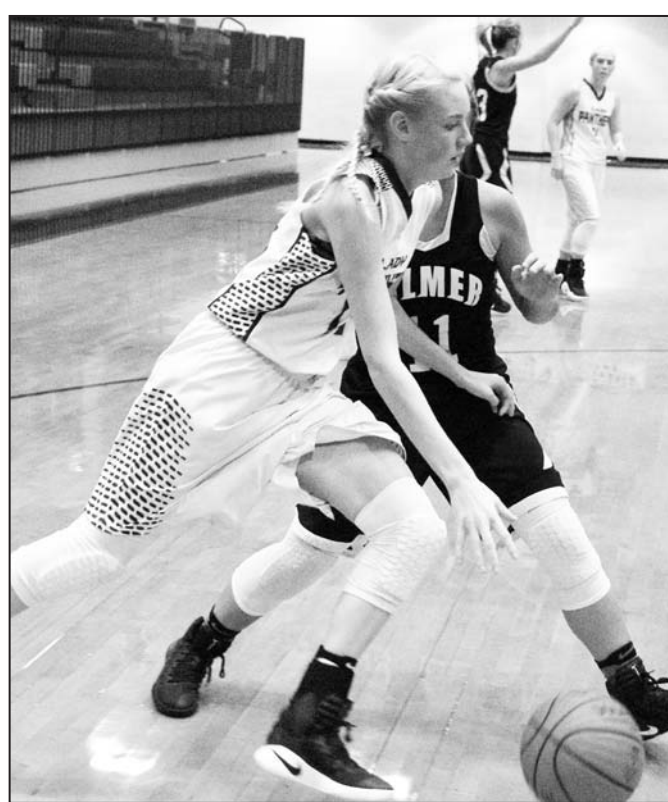
Winter weather cost Union County its remaining contests on the week with Friday's contest at Lumpkin County and Saturday home rematch with Hayesville, NC. The Hayesville game will be made up on Saturday, Jan. 21 while no make-up date has been set for the Lumpkin game.

At East Hall, the Lady Panthers were held to a season-low 21 points after the Lady Vikings limited Union to just eight second half points following a 17-13 East Hall lead at the half.

Coming out of the break, the Lady Panthers were outscored 16-5 and entered the fourth trailing 33-18. The final eight minutes were more of a struggle for Union as the Lady Vikings allowed just one basket and one free throw.

Freshman Kait McCarter led the Lady Panthers with 8 points to go with 5 rebounds, and was responsible for her team's only field goal in the fourth. McCarter scored six of Union's 13 first half points with two coming in an opening period that saw the Lady Panthers hang tough and only trail by three, 9-6 at quarter's end.

Senior Ashley Fair finished with 6 points - coming on two first half treys - and a team-high 9 rebounds and 3 steals. Union's only other 3-point basket was by junior



Senior Ashley Fair was second on the team in points (6), first in rebounds (9) and steals (3) at East Hall. Photo/Todd Forrest

Grace Wischmeyer in the third period.

Sophomore Adeline Dockrey had 2 points, 5 boards, and a team-high 3 assists while sophomore Maddie Sutton and junior Bailey Daniel had one free throw each.

East Hall was led by Winters who scored 26 points on six treys.

Union shot 8-of-27 from the floor for 30 percent while shooting 40 percent (2-of-5) at the charity stripe.

On Friday, the Lady Panthers' region contest at Lumpkin County was postponed, along with their Saturday game vs the Battle of the States Run-

ner Up Hayesville, NC.

This week Union was scheduled to host Dawson County on Tuesday. However, the fate of that game was not determined until a day after the *North Georgia News*' deadline.

The game, if played, is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m.

Friday's rematch at Fannin County will get underway at 7 p.m. in what should be another Union-Fannin barn burner. The Lady Rebels will be anxious to get revenge after allowing a 12-point, second-half lead to evaporate into an 8-point Lady Panthers' victory.

Photo Album 2016: A look back at sports in Union County over the past year



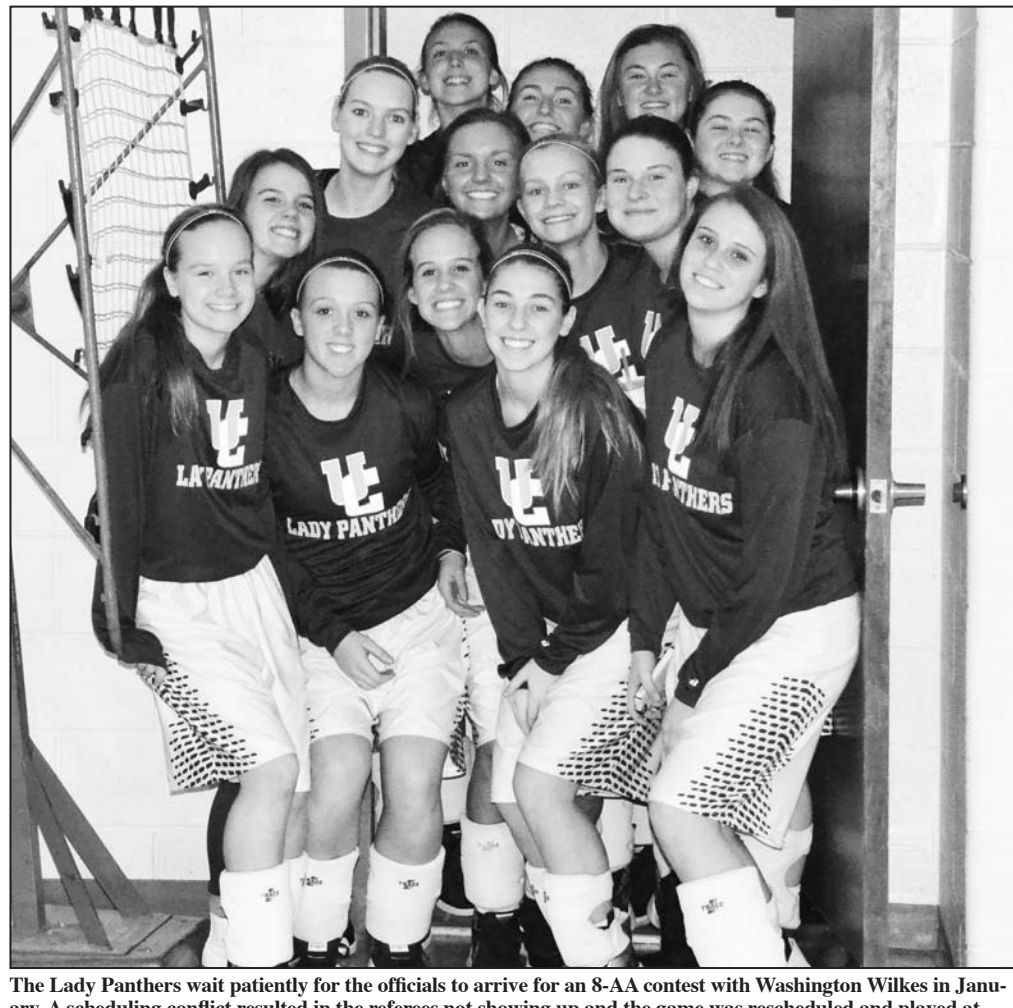
Lawson Baenninger buries a game winning jumper to defeat Rabun County in January. The Panthers would finish third in Region 8-AA before winning their first State Tournament game since 2001 when they upset No. 2 seed Bowdon to advance to the Sweet 16. Photo/Todd Forrest



Joseph Mancuso's team mates mob him to celebrate his game winning, RBI single to beat region foe Riverside last March. The Panthers won their second consecutive region title and advanced to the Elite 8 for the first time since 1995. Union County cruised through the first two rounds of the State Tournament before falling to eventual State Champion Lovett in the third round where the Panthers were the victim of a questionable base runner interference call that took Union's game-tying run off the board and killed their rally. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Union County Lady Panthers golf team blistered the competition and the course at the Region Championships before narrowly missing a State Championship for the second straight year.



The Lady Panthers wait patiently for the officials to arrive for an 8-AA contest with Washington Wilkes in January. A scheduling conflict resulted in the referees not showing up and the game was rescheduled and played at Riverside Military Academy to accommodate Wilkes. Union went on to advance to the State Sweet 16 for the first time in seven years with a thrilling overtime victory over Bowdon in the opening round. Photo/Todd Forrest