

Sports

See the Sports Section at ngame.com

Wrestling: Panthers fourth at State duals tournament

Union's quest for individual State titles begins later this month

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Columbus - Union County wrestling lost its opening round dual vs. Sonoraville at last weekend's State tournament, but rebounded by winning four straight before eventually succumbing to Cook in the consolation finals.

With the team competitions complete, the Panthers begin prep for the Traditional (individual) Area Tournament, which begins Jan. 31.

Union 30, Sonoraville 38 - The Panthers couldn't overcome an early 27-10 deficit, falling in Friday's opening round dual vs. Sonoraville.

Union fell behind 10-0 after taking technical fall losses at 106 and 113 lbs but 120-lb Eli Flowers (major decision) and 126-lb Aiden Hyatt (pin) evened the score.

Sonoraville took victories at 132, 138, 144 and 150 lbs to secure a 27-10 advantage before Paxon Legatt's pin at 157 lbs kicked off Union's late push.

Payton Legatt followed with a pin at 165, Kevin Kilpatrick scored a technical fall at 175 and Asa Smith-Foot recorded a 12-9 decision at 215. Unfortunately, the Panthers dropped their 285-lb bout, awarding Sonoraville the victory.

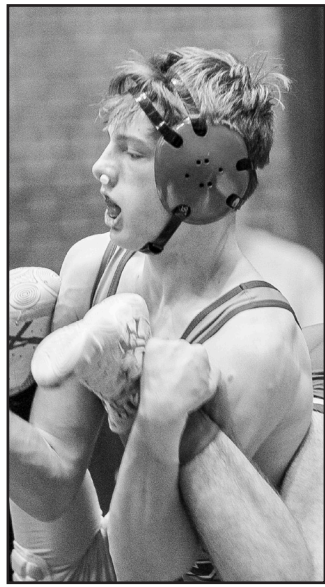
Union 71, Glenn Hills 10 - The Panthers responded to the loss by dismantling Glenn Hills in the first consolation match.

Union County won 12 of the 14 matches with 10 of those 12 victories coming by way of pinfall.

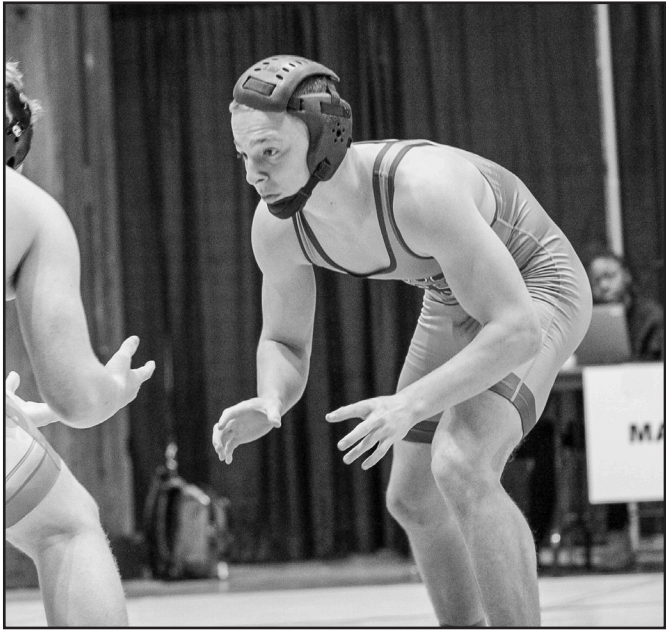
Flowers scored a 5-point technical fall victory at 120 lbs and Eli Hancock picked up a 6-point forfeit win at 106 lbs. Panthers that recorded a 6-point pins were as follows: Andrew Engle (150 lbs), Paxon Legatt (157), Paxon Legatt (165), Kilpatrick (175), Smith-Foot (190),



Union County wrestling was in Columbus last Friday and Saturday for the Class AA State Duals Tournament. Photo/Jaime Legatt



Eli Flowers



Sophomore Kevin Kilpatrick went 5-1 at State. Photo/Jaime Legatt

Jackson Arthur (285), Michael Raines (113), Aiden Hyatt (126), Thomas Gary (132) and Riley Mortensen (138).

Union 50, Morgan County 27 - Union County jumped in front 23-0 before Morgan rallied with four consecutive wins.

Clinging to a 23-21 lead, the Panthers put things away courtesy of pinfall wins by Flowers, Gary and Mortensen,

along with Hyatt's 8-3 decision, that awarded Union 3 points.

Engle added a pin at 150 lbs to put the finishing touches on Union's win.

In the early going, the Legatt brothers and Kilpatrick notched quick pins, followed by a 20-3 technical fall victory by Smith-Foot.

Union 48, Coahuilla Creek 24 - Union County doubled up Coahuilla Creek, begin-



Sophomore Paxon Legatt finished the duals tournament undefeated. Photo/Jaime Legatt

ning with wins by Kilpatrick, Payton Legatt and Ayden Lee.

Hancock, Raines and Flowers bumped Union's lead to 30-12, then Gary and Mortensen made it 39-18.

Engle won a 13-10 decision and Paxon Legatt's pin closed out the dual with consecutive Panther wins.

Union 40, Columbus 35 - The Legatt brothers pushed Union over the finish line with

victories to close out its consolation semifinal win.

The Panthers trailed 40-35 when Paxon Legatt put Union on top with a pinfall win. Payton Legatt secured his team's spot in the third-place dual via a 4-point major decision in the final bout.

The dual began with Kilpatrick's technical fall, and later, Smith-Foot and Arthur won via pin for a 17-6 Union lead.

Raines (major decision) and Flowers (pin) extended the lead to 27-12, but Columbus won four of the next five (Mortensen - decision) heading into the final two bouts.

Union 18, Cook 59 - The Panthers ran out of gas in the finals against Cook with Eli Flowers, Paxon Legatt and Payton Legatt's pinfall victories accounting for their team's only points.

Lady Panthers swindled at LFO, blown out at No. 6 Sonoraville

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

The No. 9 Union County Lady Panthers dropped both outings last week, culminating with a controversial, technical-foul-filled loss at Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe on Friday night.

Despite the two losses, Union County received some good news as senior Katelyn Brown returned to action, coming off the bench in both contests.

Lady Panthers 66, LFO 68 - Marred by eight technical fouls between the two squads and four Lady Panthers on the bench with five fouls, Union County squandered a 15-point second-half lead after rallying from 12-down in the first half.

LFO's Christen Collins scored 40 points, shooting 15-for-15 at the line during her 27-point second half.

Trailing 24-14 after one and 26-14 early in the second, Brown scored in the post and Regan Trlica hit two at the foul line, narrowing the gap to 26-18. But it was two LFO technicals that kicked Union's surge into overdrive at 3:39 in the frame, courtesy of an LFO assistant coach, who earned an early exit when she came off the bench and onto the court arguing a foul call on LFO.

When the yelling, finger-



Senior Katelyn Brown returned last week after suffering what was originally diagnosed as a season-ending injury. Photo/Todd Forrest

pointing and stomping continued after one technical, the coach was sent home with her second tech -- an automatic ejection.

Sloane Dyer split the two free throws for the initial foul call, Ariel McCarter hit three of the four technical free throws,

then hit two more free throws when she was fouled on the resulting possession stemming from the technical.

When the dust settled, Union County was within two at 26-24, and moments later, McKenna Hood and Trlica tied things up at 28-28. LFO pushed



Senior Ariel McCarter matched a team-high with 13 points during Union County's loss at LFO on Friday night. Photo/Todd Forrest

ahead 37-31 but McCarter's free throws narrowed the gap to 37-33 entering the break.

Five straight points to start the third by Taylor put Union on top, and then Dyer's trey answered Collins' trey for a 41-40 lead. Trlica's drive to the hoop and another Dyer triple

grew the margin to 46-42.

Free throws by Brown, McCarter and Trlica made it 55-44 near the quarter's 2:10 mark, and 40 seconds later, the Lady Panthers went up 59-44 when a technical foul on LFO (player) sent McCarter to the line and Aubrie Akins scored on

the ensuing possession.

Up 59-46 entering the fourth, things started unraveling for Union when Trlica fouled out with five fouls early in the frame, despite the Lady Panthers' bookkeeper showing just four fouls on the sophomore guard. However, the home book won out and Trlica was disqualified with 7:21 remaining.

McCarter put the Lady Panthers up 60-46 near the 6-minute mark, but during a discussion with an official, Brown received a quick-trigger technical with 4:13 to play and her team up 62-51.

The resulting free throws and three consecutive Union turnovers sliced the advantage to 62-59 with 2:35 left, but McCarter answered by getting to the basket with 1:48 on the clock.

Unfortunately, McCarter picked up her fifth on the ensuing LFO possession, sending her to the bench alongside Trlica and leaving the Lady Panthers' backcourt with limited options due to Ragan McCarter's unavailability (illness).

Dyer, who received a technical earlier in the half, picked up her fifth foul when she was tagged with an offensive foul 40-feet from the basket, and LFO immediately converted to climb back within

See Lady Panthers, Page 3B

No. 5 Union Co. pulls away at Sonoraville, stubs its toe at LFO

Hayden Hughes tops 1,000 career points with team-high 19 at LFO

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

The 5th-ranked Union County men's winning streak ended at nine following an 85-79 upset loss at Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe (LFO) on Friday night. The loss followed Wednesday night's victory at Sonoraville, which was rescheduled from Tuesday night.

"I don't want to make excuses but not having school all week and no practices were definitely an issue," Union County head coach Corey Garrett said. "We were out of rhythm for sure. Even Friday, we had school but nobody showed up."

"They are high school guys so I understand, I'm not blaming them, but I was hoping they would get up, get moving and get back on schedule."

No. 5 Panthers 79, LFO 85 - Union County's late rally came up short after the Warriors built a double-digit lead in the second half, outscoring Union 28-16 during the second and third quarters.

During the loss, Hayden Hughes topped 1,000 career points, with a team-high 19 points.

LFO shot 55% from the floor, scoring 50 points in the paint and hitting 20 of 30 at the charity stripe. Union County missed nine of its 16 free throw attempts.

"LFO was tuned up and I knew that's how it was going to be," Garrett said. "They played really well and I think we can all agree we didn't play our best."

"We didn't shoot very well at the free throw line and that's starting to become an issue now."

The Panthers grabbed early leads of 16-8 and 29-22, but LFO rattled off 7 straight to close the half tied. Union County was hit with a technical foul (flopping) early in the third, propelling the Warriors to a 55-46 advantage heading to the fourth.

LFO opened up a 63-



With 19 at LFO, senior Hayden Hughes became the third Panther in the last 12 months to top 1,000 career points. Photo/Todd Forrest

50 margin in the fourth, but Maddox Young's 3-point play with 5:33 left got the Panthers back on track. Ethan Hogged followed that up with another and-1, moving Union within seven.

Vince Marevka's layup and Kaden Combs' triple cut the margin to 67-61 at the 4:07 mark, and then, 30 seconds later, Young's baseline drive had the Panthers within four.

LFO extended its lead to 73-65 but Hayden Hughes' 4-point play kept hope alive. Later, with 2:06 to play, Holden Payne answered an LFO free throw, but a costly turnover prevented Union from getting any closer than 74-70.

A Warriors free throw at the 1:27 mark grew the deficit to five before they put the game away by splitting two free throws and scoring off the miss

with 41 seconds remaining.

"Despite everything that went wrong for us, we still had a chance, but it was just one of those nights," Garrett said. "LFO is a good team and we knew that coming in. Then after all the fireworks in the girls game, that gym was ready to rock."

Houston Henry finished with 16 points, seven rebounds, seven assists and two steals. Young had 15 points, nine boards, six assists and two steals. Marevka went for 10 points and eight boards; Combs added 9 points and eight rebounds; Payne had 7 points, two rebounds and an assist.

Hogged finished with 3 points, two rebounds and an assist. Hughes chipped in three boards, two assists and three steals to go with his 19 points. Union County trailed 4-2



Senior Kaden Combs (23) and junior Vince Marevka combined for 19 points and 16 rebounds at LFO on Friday night. Photo/Todd Forrest

early, but Hughes' 3 sparked a 14-4 run that gifted his team a 16-8 edge. LFO rallied within 18-17 but Payne's bucket spotted the Panthers a 20-17 lead after one.

All tied up at 20-20, treys by Young and Hughes built a 26-20 advantage, then Young's putback made it 28-22 with 4:23 left in the half. The Panthers went ice cold and wouldn't connect from the floor for the rest of the half. Kaden Combs' free throw, stretching the lead to 29-22, accounted for Union's only point until the third quarter.

No. 5 Panthers 75, Sonoraville 59 - On top 24-21 in the second period, Union County closed the half with a 14-3 run and was never threatened in the second half of Wednesday's contest.

In a contest rescheduled

from Tuesday due to icy road conditions, the Panthers built a 48-29 lead in the third, but Sonoraville answered with a 10-1 spurt.

Union extended its lead to 61-48 after three and maintained at least an 8-point cushion the rest of the way. The Phoenix battled to within 67-59 before the last 8 points went to the Panthers.

Henry led Union County with 23 points, eight rebounds, eight assists and a steal. Hughes had 19 points, eight rebounds, two assists and a block. Young added 13 points, five rebounds, three assists and two steals.

Combs finished with 8 points, 11 boards, two assists and two steals. Marevka had 8 points, five rebounds, one assist and a steal. Hogged chipped in 4 points, a rebound and a steal; Payne pulled down one

rebound.

Up next: Union County enters a week that will likely determine the top three seeds in next month's 7-AA tournament. The Panthers host third-place Coahulla Creek at 6 p.m. on Tuesday in a matchup for second place in Region 7-AA. On Friday at 7 p.m., Union visits first-place North Cobb Christian looking to keep its hopes alive for the top seed in 7-AA.

"Our only focus is getting back to business," Garrett said. "We had been on a winning streak and now that pressure is off our back. Hopefully we can bounce back and start a new [winning streak]."

With the loss at LFO, Union County fell two spots to seventh in the latest Class AA rankings.



Senior Maddox Young hits a floater at LFO. Photo/Todd Forrest



Houston Henry had 39 points in two games last week. Photo/Todd Forrest



Holden Payne scores over the LFO bigs on Friday. Photo/Todd Forrest

Lady Panthers... continued from 2B

three at the minute mark.

Down three guards, Union County coughed up possession and Collins cashed in a 3-point play on other end, tying the game with 41 seconds left. LFO's full-court pressure forced a tie-up and a change of possession and Collins went on the attack, drawing a fifth foul on Brown.

Collins hit both free throws and another Union turnover sent LFO's star back to the line to ice the contest at 68-64 with 6 seconds on the clock.

McCarter finished with 13 points, seven rebounds, four steals and two assists. Taylor had 13 points, 12 rebounds, two steals and owned a half share of an early double technical. Dyer ended with 11 points, four rebounds and two assists. Brown had 10 points, three assists and two boards.

Trlica went for 10 points, eight rebounds, three assists and a steal. Hood finished with 5 points; Akins added 4 points and five rebounds.

Lady Panthers 34, No. 6 Sonoraville 60 - Union County held a 10-8 lead after one and remained within striking distance into the fourth quarter, but Sonoraville put the game away via a 22-7 fourth quarter.

Sonoraville shot 10 of 19 (53%) from 3-point range,

while Union County hit just 28% (13 for 41) overall from the floor.

Ariel McCarter scored a team-high 14 points to go with six rebounds and two steals.

Taylor went for 7 points, six rebounds and two blocks. Trlica had 7 points and two boards. Akins scored 4 points, handed out three assists and pulled down two boards.

Hood had 2 points, a rebound and an assist.

Sonoraville's Erin Garland led all scorers with 26.

Sonoraville opened the second quarter down two, but used a 10-2 run to take control. Union County weathered the storm and went to the break down 25-20.

The Phoenix built a 33-20 margin during the third before pulling away in the fourth.

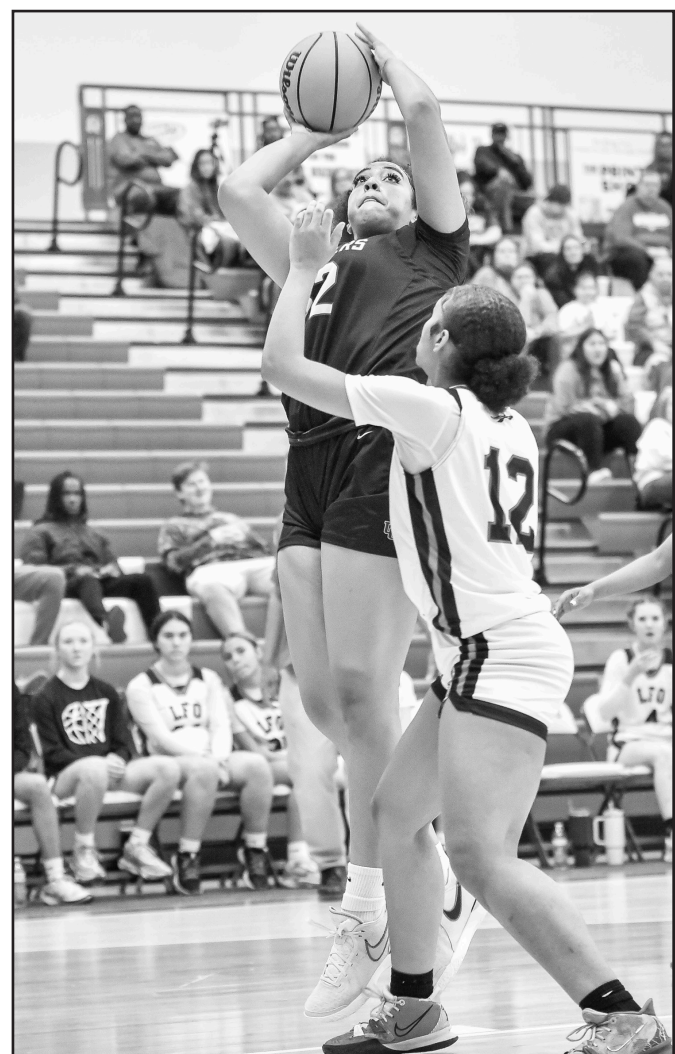
Up next: The Lady Panthers look to stay in the mix for a top-four seed in next month's region tournament when they host Coahulla Creek on Tuesday, then visit North Cobb Christian on Friday.

Last month, Union County escaped Coahulla Creek with a narrow win before suffering an upset loss at home to North Cobb Christian.

Tuesday's tip-off is at 6 p.m. Friday's game gets underway at 7 p.m.



Sloane Dyer sinks one of her three treys at LFO. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Hope Taylor had 13 points at LFO. Photo/Todd Forrest