

## **Baseball: Panthers rally past West Hall with two in the seventh**

Bats go silent in Friday's doubleheader at Social Circle as Union remains winless in region play

**By Todd Forrest** Sports Editor sports@nganews.com

Union County (1-8, 0-4) picked up its first win of the season last week, 8-7 over West Hall despite blowing a four-run lead in the seventh. Trailing 7-6 and down to their final out, the Panthers manufactured two runs to stun the Class AAAA Spartans, who entered with a 6-1 record.

Union would resume region play on Friday with a visit to Social Circle but the bats would struggle to generate runs in a pair of low-scoring pitching duels that swung in favor of the home-standing Redskins.

Panthers 8, West Hall 7 - All that John Mancuso wanted was a chance to redeem himself.

Leading 6-2 entering the seventh inning, Union County was three outs away from its first victory of 2019.

The Spartans, however, had other plans.

West Hall opened the inning with two walks and a single to bring the tying run to the plate. A two-run double made it a 6-4 game, then a hitby-pitch loaded the bases again with nobody out. On the very first pitch to the ensuing batter, senior right-hander Coleson Daniel induced a routine popfly to left-center that Mancuso appeared to lose in the lights, allowing two runs to score, putting the Spartans on top at 7-6. "I just lost (the ball),"

the Panther centerfielder said. "I asked Hunter (Kelley) in left field and Ean (Harkins) in right and they said they couldn't see it either. I don't know what happened. I must have lost it in the lights."

Daniel gave way to junior Cayden Rich, who fanned the next two batters before a wouldbe base stealer was thrown out at second to end the inning with Union trailing by a run.

With one out in the bottom half of the seventh, pinch hitter Zeke Swartz singled to center. After a strikeout had the Panthers down to their final out, Issac Mullinak battled his way aboard with a walk, bringing sophomore Damien Chitwood to the dish with the tying run at second.



Junior John Mancuso and the Panthers celebrate following his game-winning, walk-off single to beat West Iall on Tuesday evening. Photo/Todd Forrest

After fouling off the first pitch and taking the second for a ball, Mancuso hit a high pop fly behind third base that dropped between three Spartans, just inside the chalk to score Mullinak and give Union it's first win.

'That first pitch looked good so I was swinging for the fence to be honest," Mancuso said, analyzing his game-winning at bat. "I calmed myself down but the second pitch lead, Union County exploded was a ball. On the third pitch, I took a two-strike approach even though there was only one strike. I just calmed everything down, kept my hands inside and hit it. But I'm just glad that I got a chance to get some redemption.'

After Monday night's game was canceled due to cold, wet weather, there was some doubt surrounding Tuesday's West Hall's game. With gametime temperatures in the 30s and wind chills in the 20s, the Panthers decided to play ball, battling Mother Nature, as well as the opposition.

cold game but if it has to stay cold to keep winning, I'll take it," Zach Odom said with a laugh, following his first victory as Union County's head coach. "It feels great. We've had a bunch of close ball games and it was great for the kids to finally have things fall their way. It wasn't how we planned Daniel pitched around a two-out it but the kids kept pushing and single to preserve the 5-2 lead. we finally got a win. I'm proud of them. Kasten Hemphill got his first start of the season and worked five-strong, allowing 3 hits, two earned and 2 walks with 4 strikeouts. The sophomore was locked in a scoreless tie until the Panthers struck for a run in the fourth.

-- the first run of the game.

Pitching with a lead, Hemphill ran into trouble in the fifth after retiring the leadoff man. A base hit and a hit batter allowed West Hall to tie the game on an RBI single. A sacrifice fly brought in the go-ahead run before the third fly out of the inning limited the damage to only two runs.

Despite briefly losing the for four runs in the bottom of the fifth, putting Hemphill in line to record the win. Mullinak sparked the Panther rally with a base hit and a stolen base, allowing Mancuso to bring him in with a single to left.

Following a Spartan pitching change, Daniel drew a walk and Rich was intentionally walked, loading the bases for Kelley, who sent the 2-1 offering into center -- scoring Mancuso. Garrison followed suit with another single to center, bringing Daniel and Rich around to score.

A Mason McCombs walk "Î hope this is the last loaded the bases as Union County batted around before stranding all three runners and taking a 5-2 lead into the sixth

West Hall opened the sixth with a base hit off Daniel but the runner was quickly gunned down at second by Chitwood. Later in the inning,

Chitwood opened the

nobody out and his team already down a run, Rich didn't regard his appearance as simply mopup duty. Instead, he buckled down and kept West Hall in check, giving the offense a shot to win it in the seventh.

"For the past three or four weeks, I've been preaching to them about staying positive even when things don't go our way," Coach Odom said. "We keep preaching consistency, no matter what happens, and the kids have bought into it and they were able to find some success."

At the plate, Rich went 1-for-2 with 2 runs, an RBI, a steal and an intentional walk. Garrison was 1-for-3 with 3 RBIs and 2 steals; Kelley finished 1-for-3 with an RBI; Chitwood was 1-for-1 with an RBI, a run, a walk and a stolen base. Swartz went 1-for-1 with a pinch-hit single; Daniel walked and scored while Harkins, Scott and McCombs each drew a base on balls.

Daniel pitched 1-plus innings, giving up 5 runs (two earned) on 4 hits and 2 walks with a strikeout.

Panthers 0, Social Circle 2 - Mullinak went the distance for Union County, allowing one earned run on 5 hits while punching out four but the Panther bats left six runners on after out-hitting the Redskins 7-to-5.



Kasten Hemphill got the start on Tuesday and went five innings, departing with Union County holding a 5-2 lead. Photo/Todd Forrest

-- Union County's last significant scoring opportunity.

Everett drew a walk to put two runners aboard after Youngblood led off the fifth with a single. McCombs replaced Youngblood as a courtesy runner and advanced to third on a wild pitch -- putting runners at the corners with nobody out until a pair of strikeouts and a caughtstealing kept Union off the board in the fifth.

Kelley led off the seventh by reaching on an error but was stranded at second following two strikeouts and a fly out.

Social Circle starter Chandler Ball pitched a complete game shutout, fanning 12 Panthers during a 96-pitch outing

The Panthers would open the game with back-toback hits by Mullinak and Scott but two strikeouts and a pick-off ended the inning and began a very unfavorable trend for Union County.

Garrison began the second with a base hit and Kelley reached on an outfield error -putting two in scoring position with no outs. But once again, the inning would come to a close on the basepaths following a strikeout, a ground out and another pick-off.

The third saw Mullinak and Scott reach with consecu-Social Circle scored one tive one-out singles -- putting season but graduated 10 seniors in the first on an error and a runners at the corners -- before off last year's championship

Swartz turned in another superb performance, limiting Social Circle to 3 hits and one earned over six innings. The Panther southpaw also displayed near-pinpoint accuracy as 60 of his 82 pitches went for strikes with 9 Ks and no walks.

As for his counterpart, it took a two-hit, 14-strikeout performance by Social Circle's Davis Smith to top Swartz.

Swartz also helped himself at the dish by knocking in Union County's only run of the day -- a two-out single to right that scored Peyton Ivester in the third. Earlier in the inning, Ivester smacked a 3-2 pitch into right field for the Panthers' first hit of the game.

Base runners were extremely hard to come by the rest of the way. Garrison was plunked to lead off the fourth but Smith responded by striking out the next six batters he faced. He would go on to retire the final 12 batters of the game after putting Garrison on with the hit-by-pitch.

Mullinak would lead off the game with a Panther walk but Smith sat down the next seven batters before Ivester singled and scored in the third.

Up next: The Panthers were set to host the defending State Champion Murphy (NC) Bulldogs on Monday. The Bulldogs are coming off a 29-1

Chitwood replaced starting catcher Alec Scott in the sixth with Union County holding a comfortable 5-2 advantage. Now, in just the second plate appearance of his varsity career, Chitwood stroked an RBI single into center field, past the diving shortstop to even things up at 7-7.

With runners at the corners, Mancuso got his wish as he stepped to the plate with the winning run 90-feet away.

61.1

Totals

9

0 2 0

Rich got aboard with a one-out single, then reached Austin Garrison brought him in with a sacrifice fly to left field

sixth by drawing a walk in his first varsity plate appearance. He would later score on a Rich sacrifice fly to stretch the Panther lead to 6-2 heading into the seventh.

Mancuso finished 2-for-4 with a run, a walk, 2 RBIs and a stolen base. Mullinak also went 2-for-4 with a walk, 2 runs and 2 steals. Meanwhile, Rich picked third on an error. Sophomore up the win after fanning two and walking a batter in one inning of work. Entering with two on,

sacrifice fly before using a oneout triple to add an insurance run in the fifth.

For Union County, Mullinak and Scott each turned in a 2-for-3 performance from the top-two spots in the Panther lineup, only to watch the 3-through-7 hitters combine to go 2-for-15 with 8 strikeouts.

Swartz, Garrison and Alec Youngblood all finished 1-for-3 while Jonathan Everett was walked in the fifth inning

a strikeout and a caught-stealing ended the inning.

with a base hit and moved to second on a passed ball. Kelley moved him to third with a grounder to second but a strikeout retired the side.

Panthers 1, Social Circle 2 - Union County was unable to avoid the sweep as the Redskins scored the go-ahead from last week's games are lorun in the bottom of the sixth cated on Page 3B. on a two-out error.

squad On Friday, Union County Swartz led off the fourth is scheduled to resume region play when they host Monticello

for a doubleheader beginning

at 5 p.m. The Panther JV is at Fannin on Tuesday. They will begin following the 4:15 p.m. middle school game.

Union County box scores

Time

3:30

4:00

3:30

4:00

3:30

3:30

3:30

3:30

8:30

4:30

TBD

TBD

## Track and field: Union County impressive in early season meets at Lumpkin and Dawson

DATE

Monday, March 11th

Tuesday, March 19th

Friday, March 22

Friday, March 29

Friday, April 12

Thursday, April 18

Wednesday, April 24

Friday, April 26

Saturday, May 4

May 9-11

Thursday -Saturday,

## North Georgia News **Sports Special**

Union County Track and Field team placed first in over a dozen different events at Lumpkin County during its first meet of the season on Tuesday, March 5.

Individual winners at Lumpkin County include: Courtney Moose, Allie Brey, Zoe Sanchez, Hana Gregory, Brooke Dockery, Kyle Morlock, Noah Underwood, Nolan Bachman, Brendan Bowman, Riley Thomas, Joan Green, Luke Gambrell, Hayes Glover, Hunter Hartzog, Carson Walker and Zion Ross.

Many of the athletes achieved personal bests. Three school records were broken: Courtney Moose in shot put and discus and Molly Kay West in long jump.

Union County's second meet of the year was held Thursday, March 7 at Dawson County.

After a great meet Tuesday, the Track and Field team was ready to compete at Dawson

who placed first as well.

field was in action on Monday at Stephens County before an eight-day break.

Union will return to competition on Tuesday, March 19 when they visit neighboring

The month of March concludes with trips to Habersham Central on March 22 and White County on March 29.

Union will visit region foes at Banks and Rabun Counties in early April.

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#	Roster	GP	PA	AB	н	1B	2B	3B	HR	RBI	R	HBP	ROE	FC	СІ	вв	so	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
	Damien Chitwood	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1.000	1.000	1.000	2.000
	John Mancuso	6	18	15	6	6	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	1	0	2	3	.400	.471	.400	.871
	lsaak Mullinack	8	31	21	8	8	0	0	0	0	6	2	1	0	0	8	4	.381	.581	.381	.962
22	Zeke Swartz	8	23	19	5	5	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	3	4	.263	.348	.263	.611
6	Alec Scott	9	33	29	7	5	2	0	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	2	10	.241	.273	.310	.583
	Hunter Kelley	7	22	16	3	3	0	0	0	3	0	1	3	1	0	5	3	.188	.409	.188	.597
11	Cayden Rich	7	19	16	2	2	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	0	0	1	9	.125	.211	.125	.336
	Payton Ivester	5	11	8	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	4	.125	.364	.125	.489
	Austin Garrison	9	29	27	3	3	0	0	0	4	3	1	5	1	0	0	4	.111	.138	.111	.249
	Alec Youngblood	7	23	20	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	8	.100	.217	.100	.317
	Mason McCombs	6	13	12	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	4	.083	.154	.083	.237
	Jonathan Everett	6	16	13	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	5	.077	.200	.077	.277
	Coleson Daniel	5	12	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	6	.000	.167	.000	.167
24	Ean Harkins	9	26	23	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	13	.000	.077	.000	.077
19	JJ Littles	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	.000	.000
4	Jonah Daniel	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Matthew Kelley		3 6		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	.000	.167	.000	.167
Totals		9	284	235	40	38	2	0	0	22	26	7	13	6	0	34	81	.170	.287	.179	.466
#	Roster	IP	G	iP	GS	w	L	sv	sv	0	BS	SV%	н	R	ER		вв	SO	HBP	ERA	WHIP
11	Cayden Rich	1.2	2		0	0	0	0	0		0	.000	0	0	0		1	2	0	.000	.600
22	Zeke Swartz	21.0	4		4	0	1	0	0		0	.000	12	6	3	;	3	25	2	1.000	.714
3	Kaston Hemphill	5.0	1		1	0	0	0	0		0	.000	3	2	2	:	2	4	2	2.800	1.000
30	Austin Garrison	4.2	2		0	0	o	0	0		0	.000	8	5	2	4	5	8	0	3.000	2.786
24	Ean Harkins	5.2	3		1	0	0	0	0		0	.000	4	3	3	:	2	6	0	3.706	1.059
12	Coleson Daniel	5.0	3		0	0	0	0	0		0	.000	7	8	3	:	2	4	2	4.200	1.800
9	lsaak Mullinack	18.1	4		3	0	1	0	0		0	.000	26	16	12		5	15	4	4.582	1.691

0 Union County baseball season totals (through March 8 at Social Circle). Hitting (top) and pitching (bottom).

.000

60 40

25

20 64 10

0

Many personal bests were set along with several first place finishes. These include:

2.853

1.304

Brendan Bowman, Courtney Moose, Zoe Sanchez and a freshman with first time ever attempt at high jump, Allie Brey,

Union County track and Fannin County.

2018-2019 Track & Field Schedule Location Tuesday, March 5th Lumpkin Thursday, March 7th Dawson

Stephens

Fannin

Rabun

Habersham

Mt. Yonah Invitational @ White

**Banks Invitational** 

Region Meet @ Banks

Region Meet @ Banks

Sectionals @ Bremen

State @ Berry College

Valhalla Stadium

Union County Track &

Field