

Sports

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Too little too late: First half struggles hamper Union at East Hall

Vikings pile up 715 yards of total offense in 62-42 victory over Panthers

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Rabbittown – Cole Wright matched a career high with six touchdowns but it wasn't enough to overcome a 35-14 halftime deficit and 715 yards from the high powered Vikings offense.

Union County would pull within 14 points on two separate occasions in the second half but each time East Hall answered with a score, including one last touchdown, late in the fourth quarter to drive the final nail in the coffin of a 62-42 defeat.

The loss drops Union to 0-2 in region play for the first time since 2011 as the Panthers suffered consecutive losses for the first time since 2012 (at Greene Co. and at Rabun County).

The game got off to a promising start as Wright (bone bruise) was named the starter in a game time decision, but according to Union Head Coach Brian Allison, Wright wasn't his usual self.

"I think what effected him the most was not practicing at full speed during the week," Allison said. "No, he probably wasn't 100-percent, but at this point in the season nobody really is."

Playing through the pain, Wright drove the Panthers 61 yards on the game's opening drive. Facing a 1st-and-20 from the East Hall 25, Sawyer Drake hauled in the first of his two scores on the night to spot Union an early 7-0 lead.

Moments later the Vikings proved why they're leading all classifications in scoring offense by going 68 yards on 4-plays, despite suffering a loss of down on an illegal touching penalty. The drive opened with a 25-yard completion followed by an 8-yard run. On 2nd-and-2, the penalty made it 3rd-and-12 but East Hall answered with a 44-yard touchdown pass to even the score at 7-7.

Starting from their own 37, Wright moved the Panthers near midfield with a 12-yard keeper but a short loss was followed by two incompletions and Union was forced to punt. With backup quarterback Pierson Allison in at punter for the injured RJ Banton (who was limited to defense only), the Panthers attempted a fake but the pass was dropped, although it's uncertain whether a completion would have been enough for a first down on 3rd-and-12.

Taking over from the Union 46, East Hall needed just four plays once again as a completions of 26 and 17 yards sandwiched around a short run set the Vikings up with a 1st-and-goal at the one. That's when they turned to the 220-pound junior running back Cambren Harrison to punch it in the end zone for a 14-7 East Hall lead.

The ensuing Panther drive stalled after carries by Wright and Chad Buzzard moved the offense into East Hall territory, but facing 4th-and-10 from the 42, Union elected to punt. Buzzard finished the game with 152 rushing yards and 63 receiving yards to go with two touchdowns through the air – all career highs for the junior run-



Chad Buzzard (24) and Cole Wright (8) accounted for every Union touchdown while combining for the most QB/RB rushing yardage (271) since Wright and Bo Lynch went for 343 at Fannin last year. Photo/Todd Forrest

ning back. Wright's punt was downed at the Vikings 7-yard line and on first down, Cole Dockrey blew up a screen pass for a 2-yard loss. A much needed tackle-for-loss seemed to be just what the doctor order for the Union defense. On the very next play, the Panthers swarmed quarterback Austin Parker for an apparent safety but the senior signal caller somehow squirted out of the pile to create just enough room to throw the ball away.

And the Vikings would make Union pay for its missed opportunity. On 3rd-and-12 from the five, Parker connected on a 28-yard completion to keep the Georgia's No. 1 offense on the field, which is never a good thing. An 18-yard pass moved them into Panther territory until a chop block dropped East Hall into 2nd-and-20, but it wouldn't matter. Completions of 11 and 10 yards coupled with a Union facemask penalty gave the Vikings a first down at the 19. Two plays later, the Panthers found themselves in a 20-7 hole.

"Not getting the safety was a huge play for us," Allison said. "Even on the third-and-long pass. (Sean) Dobbins was in great position, the kid just made a great catch. They played a near-perfect first half. I don't think they had one bad series. You have to give them credit."

There was no quit on the Union County sideline as they answered with a 16-yard scoring strike over the middle to Kyle Morlock, trimming the Vikings' lead to 20-14 with 8:48 left in the half. The Morlock touchdown came on the heels of a 10-yard shovel pass to Chayton Schafter and an 11-yard scamper from Wright.

The 20-14 score lasted exactly 21 seconds of game time as a missed tackle turned a short completion into an 80-yard catch-and-run for the score. At the 8:27 mark of the second, East Hall stretched its lead to 28-14 following the 2-point conversion.

Things continued to unravel for Union as a holding penalty erased a big gain from Buzzard. On the very next play, Wright and Buzzard were unable to complete the exchange and put the ball on the turf, luckily Buzzard jumped on the loose football but the result of the play was an 8-yard loss. A 2-yard loss brought up 3rd-and-22 where Wright scrambled for 10 but it wasn't enough and place kicker Brian Smith took over the punting duties for the Panthers.

A booming kick by Smith drove East Hall back to the 22 but six plays later, they found the end zone once again for a 35-14 lead. A 17-yard Viking completion was followed by a 38-yard quarterback scramble two plays later. From the 15, carries of 13 and 2 yards punched it in for East Hall at the 4:03 mark of the second.

On the ensuing kickoff, Union was aided by a facemask penalty on the return and the offense took over on the Vikings' side of the 50. Three plays later, a first down run by Buzzard had the Panthers in the red zone but the drive sputtered at the 20. A 4-yard loss on second down dropped Union into a 3rd-and-13 from the 23 and two straight incompletions followed. Instead of bringing Smith onto the field for a 40-yard field goal, Union unsuccessfully went for it on 4th-and-13, handing it back to the Vikings following the turnover on downs.

The defense answered with its first three-and-out of the game and following an East

Hall punt, the Panthers had one more chance from their own 47 with 42 seconds left.

A 10-yard completion to Drake had Union on the move but a false start cost them five yards. Wright would scramble for 12 before hitting Austin Pattee on the sideline for a first down. With under 20 seconds left, Wright was forced to check down to Buzzard, who found room near the East Hall sideline before getting dragged down inbounds at the eight.

A Viking penalty on the play moved Union to the four with 3 seconds left where the Panthers used their final timeout. Once again, Union kept the field goal team off the field as their last ditch effort to cut into the deficit fell to the turf in the form of an incomplete pass.

"I really thought we were going to have to score touchdowns not field goals (to keep it close)," Allison said. "We were confident in the (play) call it just didn't turn out the way we wanted."

East Hall took the second half kick and proceeded to drive the length of the field, allowing Harrison to blast his way in from the 1-yard line once again. Trailing 42-14, the Panthers answered with a 7-yard touchdown run from Wright to cut the lead in half at 42-21. Unfortunately, Union County was unable to generate enough stops on defense to get back into the game and spent the remainder of the game swapping scores with the Vikings.

Less than two minutes



Senior DB/WR Riley Barrett returns a first half kickoff. Photo/Todd Forrest

later, East Hall tacked on seven more with a 23-yard touchdown pass. Union responded with a short completion to Drake that the sophomore took to the house from 21 yards out.

As the fourth quarter got underway, East Hall held a comfortable 49-28 advantage.

After the defense forced a stop, the Panthers pulled within 49-35 with a 36-yard touchdown pass to Buzzard with 10:45 to play. But the Vikings used a time consuming drive that was capped off by Harrison's fifth rushing touchdown of the evening to all but put the game away at 55-35 with 6:01 remaining. On the extra point, Coleson Daniel got his paw onto the kick to keep Union within 20.

With just under three minutes to play, Wright connected with Buzzard for his fifth touchdown pass of the night to make it a 55-42 game.

The Panthers outside kick attempt took a Vikings bounce and landed safely in the arms of an East Hall player with 2:45 remaining. Harrison would put the finishing touches on the victory with his sixth rushing score of the game at the 1:46 mark.

Wright finished with 282 yards through the air and 119 on the ground. Meanwhile, Drake hauled in six grabs for 115 yards – the first 100-yard game of his career. East Hall's Austin Parker threw for 437 yards while the Vikings rushing attack churned out 278 yards on the ground.

Defensively, Schafer led the way with 7 tackles for Union County.

Things don't get any easier for the Panthers as they host Dawson County, who is coming off a 30-7 victory over North Hall. Led by three-year starting quarterback Coey Watson, the Tigers opened the season ranked 10th and climbed as high as fifth in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* poll until losses to West Hall and White County dropped them out of the top 10.

Union's last win over Dawson came at home in 2010 when the Panthers denied the Tigers with a goal line stand in the final seconds to hang on 13-7. That was the last time the two teams met at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

All-time, Union is 18-12 vs Dawson County but the majority of those wins came between 1972 – 1996 when the Panthers won 12-of-14 from the Tigers. Over the last 20 years, Union is 6-10 vs Dawson.

"(Dawson) has a good running back that moved in last year," Allison said. "They obviously lost a lot of guys from last year but they're still big and they're still physical. East Hall wasn't a good matchup for us but I think we'll be able to match up with Dawson a little better."

Dawson County enters with a 4-2 record overall and 1-0 in region play. For more on the Tigers and Union County football, visit the online sports blog at: www.ngnsports.wordpress.com and follow on *Twitter* at: @hotrodtd25.

Scoring Summary

Quarter	Team	Player	Yards	Score
First Quarter	UCHS	Sawyer Drake 27 Yd Pass From Cole Wright (Kick)	7	0
	EHHS	44 Yd Pass (Kick)	7	7
	UCHS	1 Yd Run (Kick)	7	14
Second Quarter	UCHS	10 Yd Run (Kick No Good)	7	20
	EHHS	Kyle Morlock 15 Yd Pass From Cole Wright (Kick)	14	20
	UCHS	80 Yd Pass (Two-Point Conversion)	14	28
Third Quarter	UCHS	1 Yd Run (Kick)	14	35
	EHHS	1 Yd Run (Kick)	14	42
	UCHS	Cole Wright 7 Yd Run (Kick)	21	42
Fourth Quarter	UCHS	23 Yd Pass (Kick)	21	49
	EHHS	Sawyer Drake 20 Yd Pass From Cole Wright (Kick)	28	49
	UCHS	Chad Buzzard 36 Yd Pass From Cole Wright (Kick)	35	49
Fourth Quarter	UCHS	1 Yd Run (Kick No Good)	35	55
	EHHS	Chad Buzzard 3 Yd Pass From Cole Wright (Kick)	42	55
	UCHS	1 Yd Run (Kick)	42	62

Offense

Player	Comp/Att	Yds	TD	Int	Long	2PT
#8 C. Wright	18/32	282	5	-	42	-
#17 P. Allison	0/1	-	-	-	-	-
Rushing						
Player	Att	Yds	TD	Long	Fum	2PT
#24 C. Buzzard	24	152	-	24	-	-
#8 C. Wright	16	119	1	22	-	-
#15 C. Dockrey	4	15	-	10	-	-
Rest of team	1	-7	-	-	-	-
Receiving						
Player	Rec	Yds	TD	Long	Fum	2PT
#21 S. Drake	6	115	2	35	-	-
#24 C. Buzzard	3	63	2	36	-	-
#2 C. Schafer	2	52	-	42	-	-
#22 A. Pattee	3	17	-	9	-	-
#84 K. Morlock	1	15	1	15	-	-
#20 C. Rich	2	12	-	7	-	-
#15 C. Dockrey	1	8	-	8	-	-

Defense

Player	Tk	Asst	Sck	TFL	Stly	Int	Fum	Blks	TD
#2 C. Schafer	7	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
#11 R. Banton	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
#14 R. Barrett	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
#17 P. Allison	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
#32 J. Colwell	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
#53 M. Beise	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
#12 S. Dobbins	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
#30 H. Kelley	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
#34 B. Nelson	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
#74 N. Ledford	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
#50 C. Daniel	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Team Totals

Stat	UCHS	EHHS
Total Plays	90	66
Total Yards	561	715
Passing Yards	282	437
Rushing Yards	279	278
First Downs	31	25
Third Down Efficiency	5-12 (42%)	4-8 (50%)
Fourth Down Efficiency	3-6 (50%)	2-3 (67%)
Turnovers	0	0
Fumbles Lost	0	0
Interceptions Thrown	0	0
Penalties	10	5
Yards	90	59

Basketball Registration at the Union County Recreation Department

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Age Group Registration Ends
9/10 yrs old October 27th
11/12 yrs old October 27th



**Registration fee is \$50.00 and open to both boys and girls. ** Registration can be completed online at unioncountygva.gov or at the Recreation Office located at 310 Wellborn Street. If you need any additional information, please call 706-439-6074.