

# Sports

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## Panthers survive second half scare at Lumpkin to finish 6-4

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**Dahlonega** - The Union County Panthers closed the season with a 31-24 victory at Lumpkin County to improve to 6-4 on the year despite needing late-game heroics from seniors Cole Wright and Bryan Nelson after a 24-10 third quarter advantage slipped away late in the game.

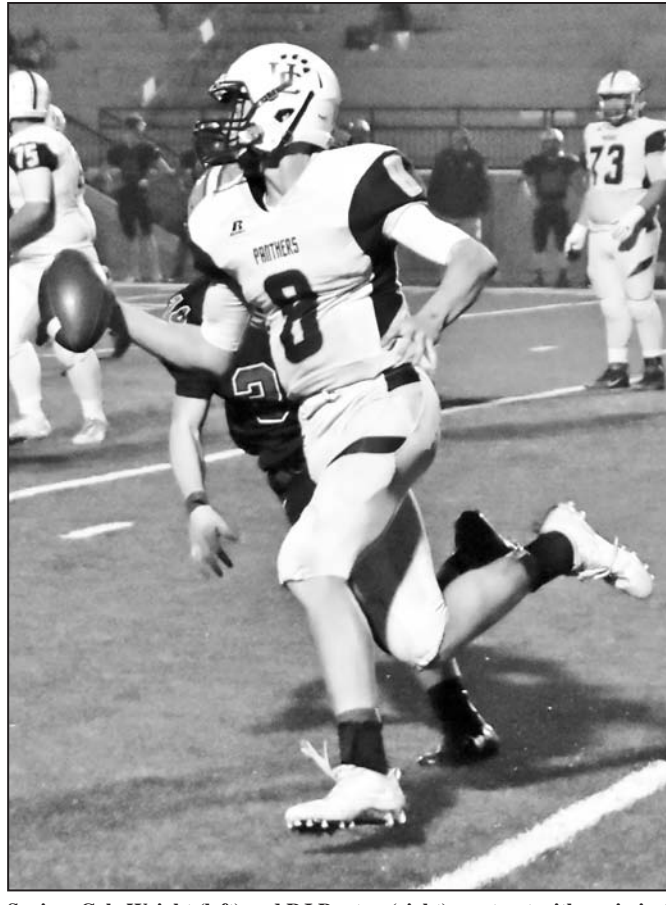
"It's a funny thing," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said. "You go through the whole season and never play a close ball game until the very last week. We either won by 20-plus or lost by 20-plus."

Leading 21-10 coming out of halftime, the Union County defense forced a three-and-out and the offense responded with a 39-yard Brian Smith field goal to extend the advantage to 24-10 with 6:25 to play in the third. The Panthers settled for three after a 15-yard scoring run by senior Cole Dockrey was called back on a holding penalty, bringing up a 2nd-and-18 that proved too much to overcome.

The Indians pulled within a touchdown with an 8-play, 80-yard scoring drive, capped off by a 36-yard run late in the third. On the fourth play of the ensuing Union County series, the Panthers coughed up the football near midfield after Wright and Austin Pattee hooked up for 26 yards on 2nd-and-7 from the 23.

"That was a huge momentum swing when we failed to put them away in the third quarter," Allison said. "Getting the touchdown called back would have made it 28-10, then fumbling the football when we were up 24-17 was another missed opportunity."

Starting from its own 46, Lumpkin went nowhere as the Panther defense, playing without three-year starter Matthew Beise on the line, gave the ball back to the offense with a critical stop on 4th-and-2.



Seniors Cole Wright (left) and RJ Banton (right) went out with a win in the regular season finale for the fourth straight year. Photo/Todd Forrest

As the fourth quarter got underway, Union County lost a yard on first down that resulted in 3rd-and-11 following an incompleting on second down. Unable to find an open receiver, Wright was forced to keep it himself but came up short of the sticks and the Panthers were forced to give up the football.

RJ Banton's punt moved the Indians back to the 12 and after a quick first down, Union dropped Lumpkin into a 3rd-and-7 from the 25 but quarterback Chandler Woodham scrambled for 12 to keep the drive alive.

A 4-yard loss on the very next play was followed by an 8-yard second down run, resulting in a 3rd-and-6. This time, the Indians not only picked up the first but took it all the way for a 59-yard, game-tying touchdown run at the 4:52 mark.

All even at 24-24, Wright and the offense took over at the

20, and on the first play of the possession, the right side of the Panthers offensive line provided a crease and that was all their senior quarterback needed. With no safeties back deep, once Wright cleared the second level there was nothing between himself and the endzone except green grass.

And just like that it was 31-24 with 4:37 to play.

"Dockrey told me right before that play, 'it's your game, man,'" Wright said of his game-winning touchdown run. "Then the blocking lined up perfectly and things couldn't have gone any better. It's a great win and I'm loving it right now. I'm going to miss these guys like crazy but it's nice to finish with a win."

Opening from its own 29, a Lumpkin County holding penalty immediately derailed their scoring chances. With an inefficient passing attack, 1st-and-20 was too much for the Indians' power running



game to overcome. A screen pass was good for 5 yards but on 2nd-and-15, the Union defense pinned its ears back and disrupted the Indians attempt at trickery, dropping them for a loss of seven on a halfback pass attempt.

A run for 9 yards turned 4th-and-22 into 4th-and-13 and the Indians dug deep into the playbook once again. This time a handoff to the running back turned into an attempted throw back to the QB in the flat. But it never had a chance thanks to Nelson, who jumped in front of the quarterback to pick off the pass at the Lumpkin County 33.

"Before the play, the coaches told us to watch for the screen pass," Nelson said after the game. "I saw the quarterback hand it off then start to go out for pass. I redirected, then (the running back) threw the ball and there I was in the right place."

With 2:23 remaining,

Wright carried twice for a game-clinching first down before lining up in the victory formation and taking a knee.

Wright finished 7-of-15 for 138 yards and a touchdown through the air to go with 18 carries for 196 yards and two touchdowns on the ground.

His first score came 74 seconds into the contest when he hit Sawyer Drake deep down the sideline for 64 yards. Smith's extra point was the 100th point of his career and gave Union a 7-0 lead with 10:46 to play in the first.

The Indians used a 34-yard run to move into field goal range where they pulled within 7-3 on a 44-yarder at the 8:05 mark of the opening quarter.

The Panthers responded with a drive deep into Lumpkin territory but a 6-yard keeper by Wright on 3rd-and-10 wasn't enough to keep the drive alive, bringing Smith onto the field for a 37-yard field goal attempt. Prior to the snap, the Indians

jumped offside, resulting in a Union first down at the 15-yard line. Three plays later, Wright kept it himself for an 11-yard scoring run on 3rd-and-6.

A quick three-and-out by the defense appeared to bring Wright and the offense back on the field but a roughing the kicker penalty breathed new life into the Lumpkin offense. When it was all said-and-done, the Indians possessed the ball for nearly 8-and-a-half minutes of game time, taking over with 2:29 left in the first and punching it in the endzone with 6:00 to play in the second quarter. The drive spanned 71 yards on 16 plays with two third down and one fourth down conversion to pull within four at 14-10.

On the ensuing drive the Panthers went nowhere and had to kick it back to Lumpkin following a three-and-out that resulted in a loss of 3 yards.

A booming 56-yard punt by Banton pushed the Indians back to their own 32 where Union recovered a fumble at its own 49, five plays later. A pass interference penalty on the first play moved the Panthers down to the 36 followed by a 17-yard give to Dockrey and an 8-yard keeper from Wright.

Two straight handoffs to Dockrey from the 11 had Union County back in the endzone and back up by 11 at 21-10 with 1:22 left in the half.

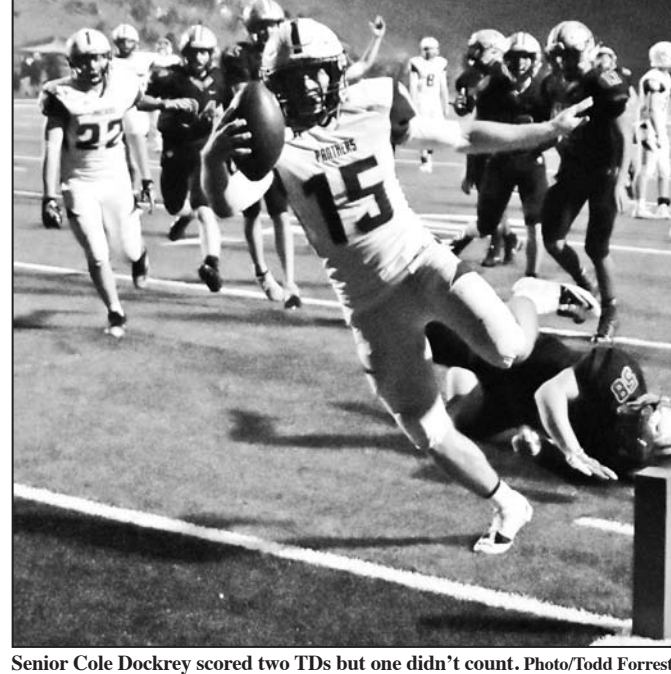
The win gives the 2018 Senior Class 32 wins over four years, tying the Class of 2017 for the most wins over a four-year stretch.

"This year's class, along with last year has been the most successful class in school history," Allison said. "They continued a tradition that began recently, and while they weren't quite as successful as they wanted to be, they should be proud of what they accomplished."

"I know they wanted more out of this season, but due to various adverse situations, things didn't happen the way we wanted them to happen."



The Panthers take the field for the final time in 2017. They left victorious 31-24 over Lumpkin County. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Cole Dockrey scored two TDs but one didn't count. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Riley Barrett attempts to block a punt. Photo/Todd Forrest



Jackson Colwell (32) and Pierson Allison (17) rush to the aid of Bryan Nelson to make certain he secures the game-clinching interception. Photo/Todd Forrest

#	NAME	GAMES	CMP	ATT	CMP %	YDS	YDS/ATT	YDS/GAME	LNG	TD	INT
8	C. Wright	9	127	219	57.99 %	1,744	7.96	193.78	71	18	3
17	P. Allison	9	20	27	74.07 %	224	8.30	24.89	50	4	-
3	K. Hemphill	1	1	2	50.00 %	29	14.50	29.00	29	1	-
	Rest of team		7	18	38.89 %	138	7.67	13.80	64	1	-
<b>Total:</b>			<b>155</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>58.27 %</b>	<b>2,135</b>	<b>8.03</b>	<b>213.50</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>3</b>

#	NAME	GAMES	CARRIES	YDS	YDS/CARRY	YDS/GAME	LNG	TD
8	C. Wright	9	92	925	10.05	102.78	63	12
24	C. Buzzard	9	113	519	4.59	57.67	24	0
15	C. Dockrey	8	42	289	6.40	33.63	62	5
17	P. Allison	9	4	29	7.25	3.22	10	-
3	K. Hemphill	1	1	29	23.00	23.00	23	-
22	A. Pattee	9	3	11	5.50	1.22	10	-
6	S. Sutton	3	2	9	3.00	3.00	6	-
2	C. Schater	8	1	7	7.00	0.88	7	-
14	R. Barrett	6	2	5	2.50	0.83	10	-
25	P. Ivester	1	2	4	2.00	4.00	4	-
	Rest of team		1	-6	-6.00	-6.00	-	-
<b>Total:</b>			<b>304</b>	<b>2,001</b>	<b>6.58</b>	<b>200.10</b>		<b>25</b>

#	NAME	GAMES	REC	YDS	YDS/REC	YDS/GAME	LNG	TD
21	S. Drake	9	29	565	19.48	62.78	71	7
22	A. Pattee	9	34	348	10.24	38.67	23	3
4	K. Hemphill	8	26	338	13.00	42.25	60	4
18	L. Dyer	6	12	187	15.58	31.17	32	1
84	K. Morlock	8	12	139	11.58	17.38	20	4
2	C. Schater	8	7	132	18.86	16.50	43	1
20	C. Rich	7	12	105	8.75	15.00	28	-
24	C. Buzzard	9	8	87	10.88	9.67	36	2
15	C. Dockrey	8	5	57	11.40	7.13	16	-
16	N. Underwood	1	1	29	29.00	29.00	29	1
12	S. Dobbins	8	2	14	7.00	1.75	10	-
	Rest of team		8	142	17.75	14.20	64	1
<b>Total:</b>			<b>156</b>	<b>2,143</b>	<b>13.74</b>	<b>214.30</b>		<b>24</b>

Union County football season stat totals