

Lady Panthers pick up key region victory at Fannin County

Second half surge propels Rabun past Union despite 20 boards from McCarter

By Todd Forrest
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BLUE RIDGE - The Lady Panthers opened region play with a 49-47 victory at Fannin County on Tuesday after holding off a late comeback bid by the Lady Rebels.

Leading 43-31 with 4:10 remaining, the Lady Panthers were the victims of a 12-2 Fannin County run that made it a one-possession game at 45-43 with under a minute to play.

Sophomore Kait McCarter drew a foul with 48 seconds left and hit 1-of-2 at the line to extend the Union lead to three. The Lady Rebels were able to earn a trip to the line on the ensuing possession when they were fouled on a putback attempt with 29 seconds remaining.

After a pair of misses, Fannin was able to regain possession when the ball bounced out-of-bounds, last touched by a Lady Panther. Fortunately, a traveling violation 22-feet from the basket gave the ball back to Union with 25.3 seconds on the clock.

Sophomore Brooke Dockrey hit the front-end of a 1-and-1 to give her team a four-point lead at 47-43 with 18 seconds left. The Lady Rebels went back to the line with 6 seconds to play, where they made the first and intentionally missed the second. The Lady Panthers were able to secure the rebound and senior Bailey Daniel put the game away with two free throws.

Fannin County hit a trey at the buzzer to trim the final deficit to 49-47.

Daniel would lead Union County with 13 points and 3 steals while the Lady Rebels' Hope Franklin scored a game-high 20 points despite taking a shot to the face in the second quarter, forcing her from the game and allowing the Lady Panthers to open up a double-digit lead on the heels of a 13-13 tie after one.

A conventional 3-point play by McCarter gave Union a 16-13 lead early in the second. After a scoring drought of nearly four minutes, another McCarter basket made it an 18-13 game with 3:49 left in the half. Andelin Hill followed with a free throw 51 seconds later then Adeline Dockrey knocked down a 15-footer to open up a 21-13 advantage at the 1:33 mark.

A Fannin bucket cut the lead to six but Mary Wischmeyer



Sophomore Kait McCarter snags one of her 20 rebounds despite getting held by a Rabun County player during the first half of Thursday's loss. Photo/Todd Forrest

scored on a putback and Daniel turned an Aubree Pack steal into a buzzer-beating layup to spot the Lady Panthers a 25-15 advantage at the break.

Two free throws from Brooke Dockrey answered a Lady Rebel basket early in the third then Daniel nailed a three for an 11-point lead with 4:45 to play in the quarter. Moments later, McCarter picked up her third foul and Fannin responded with a trey of its own. Pack continued the 3-point barrage to stretch the lead back to 11 at 33-22. The next five points belonged to the Lady Rebels following two free throws and a 3-point play. Leading 33-27 with 1:52 left in the quarter, junior Jordan Rogers converted an offensive board into 2 points before hitting 1-of-2 at the line in the waning seconds for a 36-27 advantage entering the final frame.

With 6:53 remaining, Pack stretched the lead back to nine with a layup then Daniel made it 10-point game with a corner trey at the 6:13 mark. Hill drilled a two from the corner to give Union a 43-31 advantage with 5:26 left.

A Lady Rebel deuce at the 4:10 mark sparked the 12-2 run over the next 3-plus minutes. Still trailing by eight with 2:40 remaining, Fannin cut the deficit to six with a layup. Twenty seconds later, McCarter was tagged with

her fourth foul, sending the Lady Rebels to the line, where they hit a pair to pull within four.

A Brooke Dockrey runner extended the lead back to six with 1:54 remaining but Fannin knocked down a pair at the line 13 seconds later. With 1:00 left, the Lady Rebels went back inside to pull within two at 45-43.

Brooke Dockrey finished with 9 points and 2 steals while McCarter added 8 points and 5 boards. Adeline Dockrey scored 6 points to go with 3 rebounds; Pack had 5 points and 3 steals; Hill and Rogers netted 3 points each with Wischmeyer chipping in 2 points. Hill also hauled in a team-high 8 rebounds, 3 assists, and 2 blocked shots.

Lady Panthers 41, Rabun County 51 - On Thursday, Union County hosted Rabun County in a game previously scheduled for Friday night, but the undefeated and 2nd ranked Lady Cats pulled away 54-41 in the fourth quarter.

Hill poured in a season-high 14 points - all coming in the final three quarters - to go with 11 boards. McCarter pulled down a career-high 20 rebounds and blocked 4 shots while scoring nine of her 11 points in the first half.

Rabun County tried putting the Lady Panthers away in the early going with leads of 7-2 and 13-4 but Union County answered with a Daniel trey and a

Wischmeyer layup to pull within four late in the quarter. A Lady Cat jumper gave the visitors a 15-9 advantage after one then another deuce stretched the lead to 17-10 early in the second.

McCarter went to work inside for two then hit 1-for-2 at the line for a 17-13 score at the midway point of the second.

Daniel made it a one-possession game with a 1-for-2 trip to the charity stripe that was answered by a Rabun County free throw seconds later. With 2:55 left in the half, Wischmeyer found Hill on a backdoor lay-in to pull within two at 18-16, but the Lady Cats drilled a trey to extend the lead back to five. Daniel drove baseline for two, briefly making it a 21-18 game before Rabun opened up a 24-18 advantage.

McCarter hit a pair from the line at the 1:02 mark then Hill was fouled on a putback where she knocked down 1-of-2. Moments later, Hill turned a Rabun turnover into 2 points with a jumper from the baseline, pulling the Lady Panthers within a point at halftime.

Leading 24-23 to open the third, Rabun forced five Union County turnovers on its first six trips to open up a 35-25 lead. Daniel stopped the run with a free throw at the 3:17 mark, then Hill scored on back-to-back possessions, pulling the Lady Panthers within five at 35-30. The Lady



Sophomore Andelin Hill turns a Rabun County turnover into two of her team-high 14 points. Photo/Todd Forrest

Cats, however, responded with five-unanswered of their own to take a 40-30 advantage into the fourth.

Pack and Hill scored two quick buckets to open the fourth, trimming the margin to six but Rabun used another 5-0 spurt to take a 45-34 lead with 4:27 left. Layups by Daniel and Wischmeyer, plus a Pack free throw kept Union within striking distance but the Lady Cats outscored the Lady Panthers 5-0 over the final 61 seconds.

Daniel finished with 9 points, Wischmeyer had 4 points and 8 rebounds, and Pack added 3. Georgia Stockton and Laken Stiles led Rabun County with 15 each. Kaitlin Coleman had 10.

Union County struggled at the line, hitting 8-of-17 (47 percent). They also connected on just 1-of-9 (11 percent) from long distance and committed 37 turnovers against Rabun's pressure defense.

The Lady Cats didn't fare much better, making 9-of-20 at the line (45 percent) and 3-of-14 (21 percent) from beyond the arc. With 14 turnovers, however, they clearly did a better job protecting the rock but the Lady Panthers used a 57-31 rebounding advantage to keep things close into the fourth quarter.

Looking ahead - Union County (4-2, 1-0) is off Tuesday but resumes region play on Friday when they visit North Hall

at 7 p.m. The Lady Trojans are replacing five starters off last year's 19-11 State Sweet 16 squad but currently sport a 3-2 record behind a high-scoring offense.

North Hall's weekend games at East Hall and vs North Oconee were postponed due to snow but the Lady Trojans are scheduled to host Fannin County on Tuesday, giving the Lady Panthers and North Hall a common opponent prior to Friday.

The Lady Trojans opened the season with a 61-52 loss to the always-stout Franklin County before reeling off three straight wins.

A 61-42 victory over a solid Coahulla Creek squad was followed by a 78-67 win vs 4-3 White County. The streak was capped off by 68-34 shellacking of a decent Commerce team, who owns wins over Jackson County (a Class AAA state playoff team last year) and Johnson (0-25 last year).

North Hall opened region play with a beatdown, courtesy of No. 1 GAC, who demolished the Lady Trojans 94-41 in Norcross.

North Hall swept Union County last season with a come-from-behind 64-57 win in Blairsville and a 54-36 home victory on Senior Night.

Tip-off is scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday at North Hall.



Softball: Five Lady Panthers named All-Region

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Union County seniors Jillian Lawn, Katelynn Hodges and junior Aladriel Arnold were selected to the All Region 7-AAA Softball First Team.

Junior infielder Aubree Pack and junior outfielder Maddie Sutton were named Second Team All Region.

The All Region teams were voted on by the 7-AAA coaches. The other members of the teams are:

PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Amanda Briskin (Sr) GAC.

PITCHER OF THE YEAR: Macy Banks (So) East Hall.

FIRST TEAM ALL REGION: Kendyl Chase (Jr) North Hall; Hannah Payne (So) North Hall; Carol Drake (Jr) Dawson County; Micaiah Jenkins (Sr) Dawson County; Natalie Robinson (So) Lumpkin County; Misty Goodman (Sr) Lumpkin County; Brighton Harder (So) Lumpkin County; Macy Galloway (So) Fannin County; Maddie Marchiando (Sr) GAC; Abby Jenkins (Jr) GAC; Abigail Brown



Aladriel Arnold



Katelynn Hodges



Jillian Lawn

(So) East Hall; Carley Cox (So) East Hall; Kaitlyn Daniel (Jr) East Hall.

SECOND TEAM ALL REGION: Emily Waldrep (So) Fannin County; Mackenzie Johnson (Fr) Fannin County; Maggie Schandera (Jr) Dawson County; Skylar Caine (Sr) Dawson County; Izzy Kinard (Jr) Lumpkin County; Faith Vento (So) GAC; Sydney Dearthoff (Fr) GAC; Charli Shepherd (Sr) North Hall; Macy Clark (Jr) North Hall; Kadie Sullens (Sr) North Hall; Brandi Williams (Jr) Dawson County.