

Sports

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No. 9 Panthers take down 7-0 LFO, survive at Coahulla Creek

No. 3 North Cobb Christian rallies from 13 down in Union's first region loss

By Todd Forrest
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Region 7-AA is starting to come into focus as No. 9 Union County (7-2, 3-1) won two of three games last week, knocking off unbeaten Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe (LFO) and Coahulla Creek before allowing a 13-point lead to slip away in a loss to No. 3 North Cobb Christian.

Entering the week, four unbeaten teams remained in 7-AA. Union took care of two of them in LFO and Coahulla Creek, setting up a meeting between the last two unbeaten on Saturday in Blairsville.

"Going into the week, I wanted to come out no worse than 2-1 and we did that," Union County head coach Corey Garrett said. "There's still a lot of region games to play but we're in as good a spot that we can be in."

The Panthers are set to travel to Murray County on Tuesday, then take 10 days off before participating in the Battle of the States Christmas Tournament.

No. 9 Panthers 62, LFO 48 - Union County outscored LFO 35-18 in the second half after trailing 30-27 at halftime. Maddox Young and Vince Marevka each scored 16 points to lead the Panthers to a victory over the previously unbeaten LFO on Dec. 10.

After a back-and-forth opening frame that concluded with Young connecting from 60 feet at the buzzer, the Panthers built a 22-16 advantage in the second before LFO closed on a 14-5 run.

"I challenged the guys at halftime," Garrett said. "I told them this game is yours for the taking. Own the moment. And we just came out with a different energy [in the second half]."

Threes by Hughes and Young to start the third tied things up at 33-33, then Young's floater and two Marevka buckets put Union up six at the 4:49 mark of the quarter, resulting in an LFO timeout.

Two more baskets by Marevka kept the lead at six, and Henry's trey bumped the margin to 46-37 with 2:40 left in the frame.

With their team up six heading to the fourth, Young and Marevka stretched the lead to 50-42 before Marevka's layup opened up a 10-point margin with 6:47 to play.

Hughes' dribble drive and Henry's 3 made it 57-42, then Hughes' transition 3 blew things open at 60-42 with 3:27 remaining.

Hughes finished with 13 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists and 3 steals on 3 of 9 from



Head coach Corey Garrett looks on as senior Maddox Young hits from beyond halfcourt vs. LFO. Photo/Todd Forrest

Senior Hayden Hughes dives for a loose ball with 3 seconds left at Coahulla Creek, preserving Union County's win on Friday, Dec. 13. Photo/Todd Forrest

No. 9 Panthers 53, Coahulla Creek 49 - Union County overcame a 5-point fourth-quarter deficit on the road, pushing ahead with a late bucket from Combs and game-clinching steals by Young and Hughes.

"We didn't shoot the ball well and it was our first game with more turnovers than assists," Garrett said. "We knew [Coahulla Creek] is a good team, and with their size, I think they could give North Cobb some problems."

The Panthers opened up a 24-14 lead in the second quarter thanks to back-to-back 3-pointers from Hughes, but Coahulla Creek closed the gap to 27-21 at halftime and began the third quarter with a 10-1 run to take a 31-28 advantage.

Union's first field goal of the half came from Henry, who hit a 3-pointer at the 3:31 mark to tie the game at 31-31. The Colts answered with a 5-0 run and took a 40-35 lead into the fourth quarter.

Coahulla Creek had Union in a 42-37 hole until Young connected from beyond the arc with 5:20 to play. Later, with 3:58 remaining, Young's floater from 12 feet tied the game at 44-44.

Young delivered again, this time hitting a corner 3-pointer that put Union ahead 47-46, but Coahulla Creek responded with a triple to regain the lead with 1:42 left. Young hit 1 of 2 free throws on the ensuing Panthers possession. Henry then drew a charge with 1:03 remaining, setting up the go-ahead bucket.

Hughes and Henry each missed from deep, but Union secured the offensive rebound, and Combs converted a miss by Marevka to put his team ahead to stay at the 36-second mark. Following a timeout, the Panthers went up 52-49 when Young intercepted a Colts inbound pass and hit two free throws with 18 seconds left. Hughes added another steal moments later, resulting in a Henry free throw that sealed the victory.

"To come out of there with a win after the way we played is a big deal," Garrett said. "Regardless of how we looked getting it done, [that win] was a positive."

Young led all scorers with 18 points, 3 rebounds, 2 steals and an assist as Union County overcame a 32% (18

for 56) shooting night from the floor.

Hughes added 9 points, 14 rebounds and 2 steals; Henry went for 8 points, 5 rebounds, 5 assists and a steal; Payne had 8 points and a steal.

Marevka had 4 points, 6 boards and a block; Hogsed finished with 4 points, 1 rebound and an assist. Combs recorded 2 points, 5 rebounds and 2 steals.

No. 9 Panthers 65, No. 3 North Cobb Christian 76 - The Eagles entered ranked No. 3 among private schools in Georgia but found tough sledding early on, falling behind 24-13 during a heavyweight showdown in Blairsville on Saturday afternoon.

"We can play with anybody when we're locked in," Garrett said. "I told them before the game, 'Win, lose or draw, let's come out of this game sharper than when we went in.'"

The Panthers came out



Senior Maddox Young hits from beyond halfcourt vs. LFO. Photo/Todd Forrest

firing and held a 21-11 advantage after one quarter before a 3-pointer from Hughes pushed the lead to 13 in the opening moments of the second. Union County hit four of its first six attempts from long distance to start the game, resulting in the 24-11 lead. North Cobb began chipping away, cutting the Panthers' lead to 35-30 by halftime.

The Eagles opened the third quarter with a 9-0 run before two free throws from Henry accounted for Union's first points of the half. North Cobb pushed its lead to 47-40 later in the frame, but Henry and Hughes quickly moved the Panthers within three. Two more free throws by Henry brought Union within two, but North Cobb's putback at the buzzer grew the difference to 52-48 entering the fourth.

The Eagles opened a 59-51 edge early in the fourth, but Union County fired back with consecutive 3-pointers from Hughes and one by Henry, narrowing the gap to 61-60 with 4:45 remaining. Marevka

picked off an entry pass on the other end, but Hughes' go-ahead triple rattled out.

Down 63-60, the Panthers failed to capitalize on three North Cobb turnovers on the next four possessions, and an Eagles trey built a 6-point advantage with under 2:30 left. Hughes' 24-footer moved the Panthers back within three inside two minutes, but the offense went cold down the stretch as North Cobb scored two quick buckets and hit four free throws down the stretch to pull away.

"We were right there, then we had a couple unforced turnovers and took some bad shots," Garrett said. "We had a chance to win that game. We're not happy about it by any means, but I think we came out sharper. And now the goal is to continue building on that."

Henry scored a team-high 21 points to go with 6 rebounds, 6 assists and 2 steals.

North Cobb's 6-foot-7 sophomore Brock Bonner, the son of 1990 NBA first-round pick Anthony Bonner, recorded a game-high 30 points and 9 rebounds. Six-foot-6 sophomore Xavier Butler had 24 points, 9 boards and 6 blocks.

"If [NCC] caught it at the rim, they were going to score on us," Garrett said. "They were too big and super-quick leapers. They had two putbacks at the end that were just back-breakers."

Hughes had 17 points and 3 boards on 5 of 14 from deep. Payne finished with 11 points and a steal; Marevka had 10 points, 10 boards and 2 steals.

Combs pulled down a game-high 14 rebounds to go with 4 points. Young battled foul trouble all night and was limited to 2 points in 11 minutes.

Up next: Union County visits Murray County (3-5, 3-2), which owns wins over North Murray, Sonoraville and Rockmart. The Indians suffered a 60-57 loss at Coahulla Creek on Saturday night.

Towns County's Battle of the States Christmas Tournament opens on Dec. 27 when Union County plays Coosa (4-2) at 2:30 p.m.



Junior Holden Payne provided his team a lift, coming off the bench to score 11 points vs. NCC. Photo/Todd Forrest

CLASS 2A		WEEK 6	
BOYS	SCHOOL	RECORD	MOVEMENT
#1	CARVER-COLUMBUS	5-0	--
#2	COLUMBIA	8-3	--
#3	KIPP ATLANTA	6-3	+2
#4	SOUTH ATLANTA	6-2	--
#5	BUTLER	3-3	-2
#6	UNION COUNTY	7-2	+3
#7	SPENCER	6-2	+1
#8	HART COUNTY	7-1	+2
#9	DREW CHARTER	6-4	NR
#10	SALEM	5-6	-4

Union County is up three spots in the latest rankings.

Union County pulls away from LFO, rallies at Coahulla Creek

North Cobb Christian upsets shorthanded Lady Panthers

By Todd Forrest
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Union County's roller-coaster week began with a win over Lakeview Fort-Oglethorpe, just hours after learning that three-year starter and all-region forward Katelyn Brown was done for the year with a hip injury.

Later in the week, the Lady Panthers (6-3, 2-2) rallied from a 12-point deficit on the road to defeat Coahulla Creek but suffered an upset home loss Saturday at the hands of North Cobb Christian while playing without 6-foot-1 senior Hope Taylor.

While Taylor's absence will be limited to just one game, the road only gets tougher for Union County as they travel to Murray County, the Region 7-AA first-place team, on Tuesday.

Lady Panthers 60, LFO 44 - Taylor scored a career-high 27 points, pulled down nine boards and blocked four shots as Union County outscored LFO 41-25 in the second half to pull away from a 19-19 tie.

"We struggled a little bit early on getting [Taylor] the ball," Union County head coach Thomas Nelson said. "In the second half she was able to catch the ball in better position and our girls were able to get it to her when she was open. She made some big plays."

Senior Ariel McCarter added 12 points, five rebounds and four assists in the win.

The Lady Panthers fell into an early 7-0 deficit but battled back to within 12-10 after the first quarter. Trailing 29-23 in the third, Union started to find an offensive rhythm when Nomi Nelson connected from 3-point range at the 4:35 mark.

Two free throws by McCarter moved the Lady Panthers within a point, and Sloane Dyer answered an LFO bucket with a game-tying trey. Later in the third, consecutive low-post baskets from Taylor and two more at the line by McCarter put Union County on top 39-33 at the quarter's end.

Taylor opened the fourth with another bucket down low, and Mady Adams hit from 15 feet to keep the cushion at 43-36. Taylor scored again to build a 10-point lead with 4:11 remaining, and then McCarter's 3 opened up a 51-40 advantage on the ensuing possession.

Two buckets by Taylor put the game out of reach, opening up a 55-42 lead near the 1:50 mark.

Aubrie Akins finished with 7 points and 3 rebounds. Dyer had 6 points, 7 assists and 5 rebounds; Trlica scored ended with 3 points, 4 boards and 3 assists; Nelson had 3 points, a rebound, an assist and a steal; Adams added 2 points, 4 boards and a steal.

Lady Panthers 50, Coahulla Creek 47 - Union County outscored the Colts 18-6 in the second quarter then held on courtesy of two clutch free throws by Nelson with 11 seconds left.

"[Coahulla] had been on a hot shooting streak," Coach Nelson said. "The game before, they set a school record for made 3s. We were able to locate and get out to their shooters and get a hand up in



Sophomore Nomi Nelson sinks two free throws with 11 seconds left in Union's win at Coahulla Creek. Photo/Todd Forrest

the second half. We didn't do a very good job of that during the first half."

Down 16-7 after one and 25-13 in the second, the Lady Panthers got within single digits, 29-21 at the break. Coahulla Creek knocked down a 3 to start the third, but Akins answered on the other end and Taylor scored over a double-team, slicing the margin to seven.

Additionally, Union County applied full court pressure in the second half, resulting in turnovers and fast break opportunities.

"When we can make teams play a little bit faster, that's an advantage for us," Coach Nelson said.

Less than 3 minutes into the quarter, Dyer cashed in her steal with a triple on the other end, and then Taylor scored on a putback, bringing Union within two, 32-30, at the 4-minute mark.

Taylor split two free throws, and Dyer connected again from downtown for a 34-32 lead. McCarter hit from 17 feet before Coahulla ended

a six-minute scoreless drought, halting Union's 15-0 run.

With five seconds left in the third, Trlica split two free throws to send the Lady Panthers into the fourth quarter ahead, 39-35.

Consecutive buckets by McCarter bumped the lead to 43-37 near the 5:40 mark, but the Colts fired back with a 7-0 run to retake the lead with 3:48 to play. Trlica's 15-footer put Union back in front on the ensuing possession, and Nelson's 3-pointer made it a 48-44 game with under three minutes remaining. Both offenses went quiet until the final moments when a Union turnover resulted in a Colts' trey with 15 seconds left.

With her team nursing a 48-47 lead, Nelson stepped to the line with 11 seconds remaining and sank two free throws, forcing a Coahulla 3 on the other end. The Colts found the open look, but the shot bounced off the back iron and into McCarter's hands as time expired.

"I'm really proud of our girls, especially our cap-



Senior Hope Taylor logged a career-high 27 points and four blocked shots in Union County's Region 7-AA win over LFO on Tuesday. Photo/Todd Forrest

tains Hope, Aubrie and Ariel," Coach Nelson said. "Their crowd was really getting on Hope and saying a lot of things to her, but their senior leadership really shined through."

Coahulla Creek shot 6 for 11 from long distance during the first half but went just 2 of 16 after the break.

Trlica led all scorers with 15 points, 5 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 steals and 2 blocks. Nelson had 10 points, 2 rebounds, 2 assists and 2 steals. Dyer scored 9 points with 3 rebounds, 2 assists and 3 steals.

McCarter had 7 points, 5 rebounds, 5 assists, 2 steals and 2 blocks. Taylor, who spent much of the night in foul trouble, had 5 points, 4 boards, 2 steals and 2 blocks. Akins had 2 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists and 2 steals. McKenna Hood added 2 points and a steal. Mady Adams had 4 rebounds, an assist and a block.

North Cobb Christian 56, Union County 47 - Playing without its star center, the Lady Panthers never led as NCC built an early 10-0 lead en route to a 9-point win on

Saturday afternoon in Blairsville.

"It was very frustrating," Coach Nelson said. "We had so many opportunities to chop away at their lead or go ahead, but couldn't get it done."

Union County climbed within 15-13 during the latter stages of the first and trailed 17-13 at the quarter's end, but were done in by the Eagles' 17-5 second frame.

Down 38-30 in the third, the Lady Panthers made a push to inch within three entering the fourth. But once again, NCC had a response, opening the fourth with a 10-0 run that put Union County away.

[NCC] made a lot of shots," Coach Nelson said. "It was a situation where we couldn't make shots and [NCC] was fortunate to make theirs when it counted."

Trlica led the Lady Panthers with 13 points and 4 boards. McCarter went for 12 points, 7 rebounds, 6 assists and 2 steals. Nelson logged a career-high for a second-straight game, finishing with 11 points to go with 3 boards

and an assist.

Akins ended with 6 points and 8 boards; Adams had 3 points and a rebound; Dyer finished with 2 points, 4 rebounds and 3 assists.

Ragan McCarter had 3 rebounds and 2 steals; Tatum Fisher added a rebound.

"I'm proud of the way these girls are sticking together, even after they lose games they know they should have won," Coach Nelson said. "I can't say enough about these girls' character."

Up next: Union County travels to Chatsworth on Tuesday to face a top-five Murray County squad that has eliminated the Lady Panthers in each of the last two post-seasons. Tip-off is scheduled for 6 p.m.

"Murray County is a very solid team, their point guard is really good and we're going to have our hands full over there at their place," Coach Nelson said.

Towns County's Battle of the States Christmas Tournament opens for Union Dec. 27 at 1 p.m. vs. Coosa.



Senior Ariel McCarter drives to the hoop vs. LFO. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sloane Dyer and Regan Trlica hit the floor for a loose ball at Coahulla Creek. Dyer knocked down three 3s, including a go-ahead trey during Union's third-quarter comeback. Photo/Todd Forrest

UCMS Swim Team results

UCMS Swim Team

Top 10 Finishes

Holiday Invitational Meet | Dec. 6 | Tallulah Falls

200 Medley Relay

Boys A Team: 3rd (Corbin Swor, Logan Tercero, Wyatt Yancey, Christiaan Jordaan)

Girls A Team: 3rd (Mckynlee Simpson, Genevieve Conley, Kimberly Simpson, Gianna Tercero)

Girls B Team: 9th (Catherine Colwell, Grace McCollum, Ali Gwynn, Harper Adams)

100 IM

Henry Livingston: 5th
Gianna Tercero: 5th
Carter Tippens: 10th

50 Freestyle

Wyatt Yancey: 1st

50 Butterfly

Kimberly Simpson: 1st
Gianna Tercero: 6th
Genevieve Conley: 8th

50 Breaststroke

Logan Tercero: 1st
Kimberly Simpson: 2nd
Genevieve Conley: 6th

OVERALL

Boys: 3rd

Girls: 2nd

100 Freestyle

Henry Livingston: 3rd
Logan Tercero: 4th
Corbin Swor: 10th
Ali Gwynn: 10th

500 Freestyle

Wyatt Yancey: 2nd (EXH)

200 Freestyle Relay

Boys A Team: 3rd (Logan Tercero, Henry Livingston, Christiaan Jordaan, Wyatt Yancey)

Girls A Team: 3rd (Mckynlee Simpson, Genevieve Conley, Gianna Tercero, Kimberly Simpson)

Girls B Team: 9th (Catherine Colwell, Valynn Lanham, Harper Adams, Ali Gwynn)

50 Backstroke

Mckynlee Simpson: 8th
Corbin Swor: 9th
Carter Tippens: 10th

Soccer: Union County's 8U Strikers finish season with unbeaten record



The Union County 8U Strikers youth soccer team has finished their 2024 season undefeated. With zero losses and only one tie, these young men worked hard and learned so much along the way. We are so proud of everything they have accomplished. Way to go boys! The 8U Strikers team consists of Tucker Anderson, Lincoln Anderson, Oliver Burdine, Mason Burger, Zane Burger, Grant Colwell, Wylder Cox, Noah Parker, and Wilkes Townsend. Coach Jared Burdine and Nick Townsend.