

Sports

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Rivalry Week: Shorthanded Panthers win back-to-back region games

Union hangs on vs former region rival Dawson; completes the season sweep at arch-rival Fannin

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Still playing without leading scorer Lawson Baeninger, the Panthers capped off a perfect week with a pair of region victories over Dawson County and Fannin County.

The win at Fannin was Union's first road victory in Region 7-AAA and the Dawson victory was just the fourth win over the Tigers since 2007.

After the Panthers owned just one victory over Dawson from 2007-to-2012, Union County Head Coach Casey Jones has turned the tide on the former 8-A and 8-AA rivals, winning three of his five meetings with the Tigers.

On Friday, the Panthers (8-9 overall, 3-3 in region play) took care of business at Fannin County to wrap up the season sweep of the Rebels and claim their 12th victory in the last 15 meetings of the border-war rivalry.

BLUE RIDGE - Panthers 47, Fannin County 46 - Fannin senior Lester Holt may have filled up the stat sheet on Friday night with 27 of his team's 46 points, but it wouldn't be enough to overcome a balanced Panthers' attack that didn't see a single player reach double-digits in the points column.

With six different players scoring at least six points, Union County capped off the regular season sweep of the Rebels for the fifth time in the last eight seasons.

While juniors Candler and Crawford Colwell topped the Panthers with 9 points each, it was freshman Pierson Allison that saved the day.

Making the second varsity start of his career, Allison scored all eight of Union's fourth quarter points during the final 3 minutes and 50 seconds.

"That's big time for a freshman," Union Head Coach Casey Jones said of Allison's fourth quarter. "The 3s were big, but to me, the free throws were bigger."

A driving lay-up by Cole Wright put the Panthers on top 39-38 after three quarters but early in the fourth, Fannin



Freshman Pierson Allison scored all eight of Union's fourth quarter points, including the game winning free throws. Photo/Todd Forrest



Freshman Sawyer Drake (10) led the Panthers' defense with 5 steals. He also recorded a game-high 5 assists while blocking two shots. Photo/Todd Forrest



Coach Jones and the his staff during a break in the action at Fannin County. Photo/Todd Forrest



Crawford Colwell led Union with 19 vs Dawson Co. Photo/Todd Forrest

County went inside for a pair of baskets to take a 42-39 lead. The Rebels could have extended its advantage but missed all four of their free throw attempts during the opening four minutes of the final period.

And Allison made them pay.

With 3:50 remaining, he nailed a trey from the right wing to knot the score at 42-42. Then, with 3:12 to play and the game still tied, he connected from the other wing to put Union ahead by three.

A put-back on the other end allowed Fannin to pull

within one at the 2:28 mark. On the ensuing Rebels possession, they came up empty once again at the line, allowing Union to cling to its 45-44 advantage with two minutes to play.

After burning more than 60 seconds off the clock, the Panthers were whistled for an

offensive foul while trying to get the ball in-bounds under their own basket.

Union was able to force a stop on the other end but continued having issues getting the ball in, resulting in Coach Jones burning through his final two timeouts in one possession.

As the Rebels turned up the heat on the defensive end, the Panthers' in-bounds pass bounced directly into the hands of Holt, who turned and converted the easy lay-up with

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Lady Panthers overpowered by Dawson; suffer heartbreak at Fannin

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Union County was unable to bounce back from a 23-point loss to Dawson County on Wednesday when they visited Fannin County on Friday.

With the two teams all-even after 30 minutes of play, a very debatable technical foul was issued to Lady Panthers' Head Coach David Tucker with two minutes remaining.

Following the technical, the Lady Rebels went on a 9-2 run to hand Union (7-10 overall, 1-5 in region play) its third straight loss after opening the new year with a 7-7 overall record.

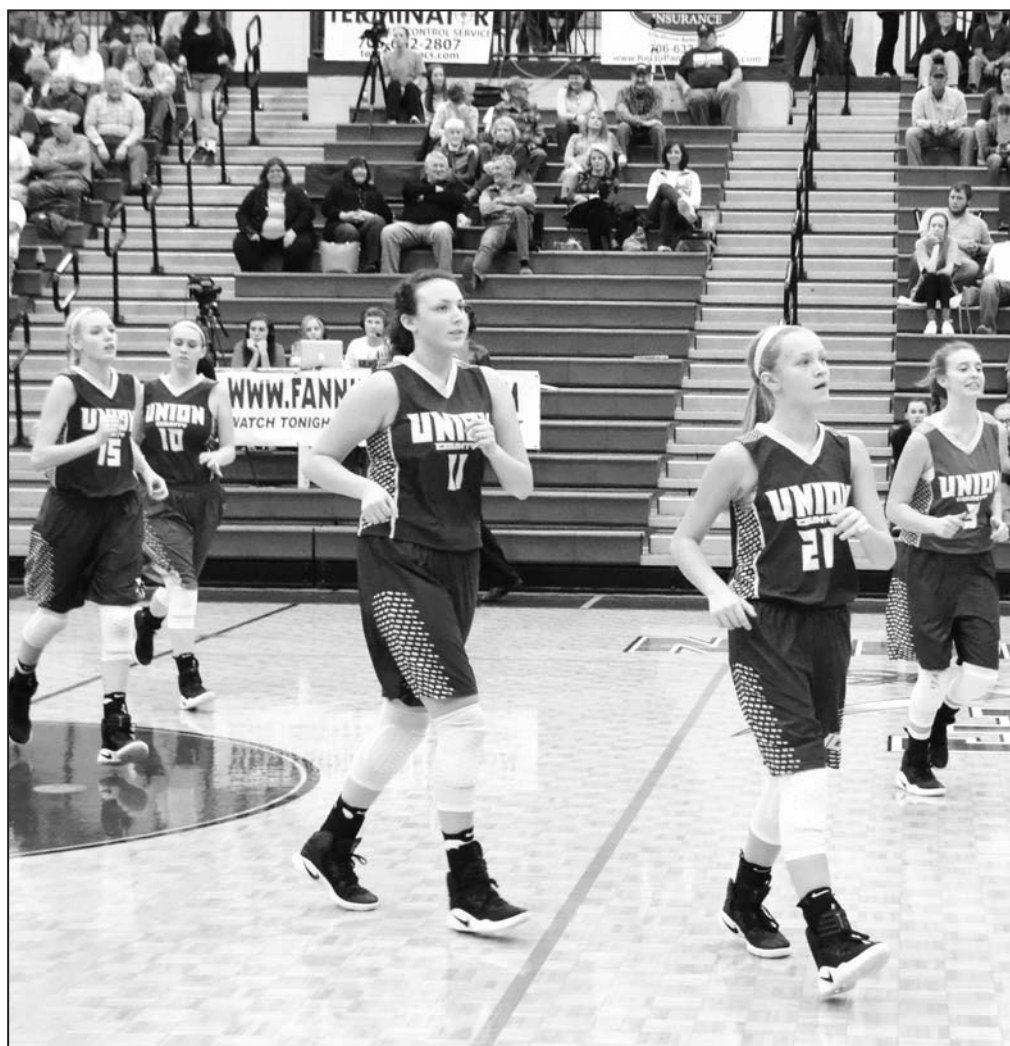
BLUE RIDGE - Lady Panthers 38, Fannin County 45 - The Lady Panthers were victims of home-cooking in Blue Ridge on Friday night when a quick tempered official decided the outcome with his whistle, swinging the pendulum of a tied, evenly matched contest towards Fannin County with just over two minutes to play - denying the players and fans another classic finish in the Lady Panthers vs Lady Rebels rivalry.

It all began when Union turned the ball over and were whistled for a foul. As the Lady Panthers were frantically attempting to break the Fannin full-court press, Union County Head Coach David Tucker began shouting at his team to "slow down" and "take their time." Following the turnover and foul, Tucker continued to yell at his team, as an official walked by the Union bench, he quietly brought his hands together in the shape of a T, indicating a technical foul, but kept on walking to the other end of the floor, without informing Tucker a technical had been issued.

Moments later, a different official came over to the bench to give Tucker the news.

Not knowing that he had been issued a T, he asked the official what he did to earn a technical, and the referee replied, "I don't know, I'm not the one who gave you the technical, but you need to sit down." End of story.

Confused by the call, Tucker began asking his assistants what happened and he was told that the technical was probably for shouting at his own player.



The Union County Lady Panthers exit the floor, leading 13-7 after one quarter of action at Fannin County last weekend. Photo/Todd Forrest

personal with 1:04 remaining. Two made free throws later, Fannin led 43-38. The Lady Rebels would connect on 2-of-6 from the line over the final minute, while Union went ice cold from the floor with sophomore Adeline Dockrey (Union's leading scorer in the game) joining Daniel on the bench with five fouls.

The Lady Panthers were in control during the early going before Fannin turned things around in the second quarter.

A Grace Wischmeyer trey, a steal-and-score by Daniel, and a corner jumper from Adeline Dockrey spotted Union an early 7-3 lead. After the Lady Rebels evened the score, Adeline Dockrey knocked down a three from

panthers coach. Meanwhile, Fannin County was in the process of shooting four free throws on the other end, and after sinking three, they maintained possession, allowing them to hit 1-of-2 at the line 18 seconds later to take a 40-36 lead with 1:53 to play.

Bailey Daniel pulled Union to within two with a pair from the charity stripe at the 1:32 mark. Those would be the Lady Panthers' final points, however. Twenty-one seconds later, the Lady Rebels went 1-for-2 from the line and after securing the rebound on the miss, Union was whistled for traveling.

With her team forced to foul, Daniel picked up her fifth

personal with 1:04 remaining. Two made free throws later, Fannin led 43-38. The Lady Rebels would connect on 2-of-6 from the line over the final minute, while Union went ice cold from the floor with sophomore Adeline Dockrey (Union's leading scorer in the game) joining Daniel on the bench with five fouls.

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Freshman Andelin Hill guards a Fannin ball handler. Hill hit a 3 in the third to give Union the lead after trailing by nine. Photo/Todd Forrest

the wing for a 10-7 score. Following a miss on the other end, Brooke Dockrey pulled up from way beyond-the-arc and drilled a deep three from near Aska.

Leading 13-7 after one, Fannin's defense turned the tide by limiting Union to just two points in the second. An Ashley Fair jumper with 6:12 left in the half gave the Lady Panthers a 15-12 lead but they wouldn't score again and the Lady Rebels closed the quarter with an 8-0 run that put Union in a 20-15 hole at the intermission.

Fannin continued pulling away as the third period opened with a 6-2 spurt where a Brooke Dockrey lay-up at the 6:40 mark accounted for the only Lady

panther offense. Trailing by as many as nine (26-17) with 5:26 left in the quarter, Union responded with an 8-0 run to pull within a point.

Freshman Kait McCarter got the rally started with two in the paint, Fair converted a Fannin turnover into a bucket. McCarter struck again, this time on a put-back, and freshman Andelin Hill was perfect at the line to make it a 26-25 game at the 3:20 mark of the third.

Moments later, Union had a chance to regain the lead but missed the front-end of a 1-and-1 attempt and Fannin went inside for a deuce on the other end.

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