

Sports

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Soccer: UCMS caps off unbeaten season with league title

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The Union County Middle School boys finished the season unbeaten (12-0-1) for the first time in its history following a 2-0 victory over Habersham Central in the Mountain League Championship Game.

The top-seeded Panthers earned the right to host the final game with a 3-0 shutout of Rabun County, two days earlier, setting up the title game on Thursday afternoon at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

In the early going Thursday, Union caught a break when Habersham unintentionally cleared the ball into its own goal - spotting the Panthers a 1-0 advantage just seven minutes in.

The Raiders, however, controlled possession for the remainder of the first half but Union County was able to preserve its one-goal margin thanks to the play of goalkeeper Landon Kight, who denied several shots on goal.

With the second half underway, it was obvious the Panthers were desperate to seize control with a second goal. Within the first three minutes, Union bounced two shots off the post, but couldn't find the net.

Habersham would gather themselves following the Panthers barrage and just missed



The Union County Middle School soccer team following its championship victory over Habersham Central on Thursday. Photo/Todd Forrest

on several attempts to even the score.

With 11:52 remaining, Kight made another stop for Union, only to watch the Raiders send a kick high off the crossbar at the 9:45 mark, then they missed wide right with 3:30 to play.

Habersham's final opportunity came with just under three minutes left when a kick sailed wide left at the 2:58 mark.

As a result, the Raiders left the door open for the Pan-

thers to deliver the dagger and that's exactly what they did.

As the clock ticked under two minutes, MJ Delatte's perfectly placed corner kick set up a Dalton Allen header goal with 1:44 remaining - all but securing the Union County victory.

Delatte's corner kicking skills have become the stuff of legend during this postseason. During the Rabun County win, the Panther midfielder assisted Kyler Robbins' header goal with a corner kick.

As for Robbins, the Union

County forward finished the season with a team-high 19 goals. Forward Landon Cox scored 14 goals, while Allen had nine and Delatte scored six goals.

Of a roster of 17 players, 11 different Panther players recorded a goal this season. The final tally for the 2018 campaign: Union County - 57 goals scored, the opposition - six goals.

"I would like to give big props to my defensive line led by keeper Landon Kight and sweeper Elijah Helton in only allowing six goals during the

entire season," UCMS Head Soccer Coach Chris Robbins said. "I would also like to acknowledge the midfielders and forwards. Without their hustle and determination, our team would not have been able to outscore our opponents 57-6."

The regular season championship, as well as the tournament title, were both firsts for Robbins, who has been at the helm of UCMS for six seasons.

"I am extremely proud of my players' hard work and dedi-

cation in completing an almost flawless season, with our only stumble coming from a 1-1 tie vs Lumpkin County.

"A special thanks to UCMS Athletic Director Mandy Hunter; Blairsville Ingles for supplying snacks for away games; Sawmill Restaurant for our season championship team breakfast, and to all of the parents and supporters who believed in us and cheered us on," Robbins added. "It was a great season."

