

Sports

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Panthers get back on track with a win over Fannin on Senior Night

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There's nothing like the sight of an arch-rival to get the juices flowing.

Coming off their longest losing streak in six years, the Panthers returned to form with a 37-14 Senior Night victory over Fannin County.

"It feels good to get back into the win column," Head Coach Brian Allison said. "It was a long five week stretch with the open week."

Despite the recent struggles, Union's defense was disruptive for four quarters, limiting the Fannin offense to just 147 total yards and a 2-of-14 conversion rate on third down.

"I was glad to see the guys bounce back like that," Allison said. "We've had four good games and four not-so-good games on defense. It's just been one of those years."

"For the first time since the GAC game, RJ (Banton) was close to 100-percent, Jackson Colwell was nearly 100-percent, and we also had Chayton (Schafer) back."

Meanwhile, Cole Wright led a balanced offensive attack, compiling 487 total yards – 251 rushing and 236 passing. The recent Army commit accounted for 381 yards and two scores with 147 yards coming on the ground as the Panthers were never threatened following a 24-7 halftime advantage.

On the game's opening series, Union County settled for a 27-yard field goal from Brian Smith – who finished the game with 99 points (kicking) for his career. After a Fannin punt, the Panthers leaned heavily on senior running back Cole Dockrey to open up a 10-0 advantage.

Following Dockrey's 1-yard touchdown run, Fannin answered with a 44-yard scoring drive to pull within 10-7, early in the second quarter, but that's as close as they'd get.

On the ensuing drive, Wright saw a 56-yard touchdown run called by Wright on 3rd-and-4. With a first down at the 19, Wright kept it himself for 11 yards but the drive stalled after Union County lost a yard on first down followed by consecutive incomplete passes.

Smith was called upon



The Union County Panthers football team takes the field for the final time this season at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium. Photo/Todd Forrest

61-yard scoring drive, capped off by a 1-yard Chad Buzzard scoring run to open up a 24-7 lead at the break.

Neither team was able to put points on the board during the third quarter but on the opening play of the fourth, Wright and Kanon Hemphill hooked up on a 60-yard scoring strike to pull ahead 31-7. Fannin would tuck on a touchdown later in the quarter but the Panthers responded with a 62-yard touchdown run by Dockrey to put the exclamation point on a 37-14 victory.

Dockrey finished with a season-high 88 yards and two scores on 11 carries to go with 28 receiving yards. Hemphill added 100 yards and a score on 5 catches while Drake added 55 yards on four grabs.

The game's opening drive saw Wright and Austin Pattee hook up for 9 yards to move the chains, followed by an 8-yard keeper from Wright on 3rd-and-4. With a first down at the 19, Wright kept it himself for 11 yards but the drive stalled after Union County lost a yard on first down followed by consecutive incomplete passes.

Smith was called upon

split the uprights to spot the Panthers an early lead.

The defense forced a quick three-and-out and the offense took over from the Rebels 42-yard line. Wright tore off runs of 13 and 27 yards before four straight gives to Dockrey resulted in 17 yards and six points.

After the defense forced another three-and-out, Fannin flipped the field position with a 68-yard punt that pinned Union at the one. Unable to escape the shadow of its own endzone, the Panthers punted back to the Rebels, who set up shop with excellent field position at the Union 44.

Faced with a 4th-and-2, Fannin converted to move the chains, then a 17-yard run and a Union personal foul set the Rebels up with a 1st-and-goal. On the very next play, Fannin pulled within three with a 9-yard run and the point after.

The Panthers quickly responded with a 20-yard completion to Kyle Morlock followed by Wright's long touchdown run that didn't count. With a 1st-and-16, Wright hit Pattee for 10 yards then kept it himself for 10

more. A pass interference on Fannin and a 15-yard carry by Dockrey moved the Panthers to the 11-yard line where Wright took it to the house on first down.

Starting from their own 22, Fannin converted another fourth down but a false start turned a 3rd-and-8 into a 3rd-and-13. The Rebels managed to pick up 11, resulting in another fourth-and-short, but this time the Panthers were prepared and dropped Fannin for a 2-yard loss to take over at the Rebels 40-yard line.

An 8-yard swing pass to Buzzard then a 16-yard catch-and-run by Drake had Union on the Fannin County doorstep. This time the Panthers went back to Buzzard, who dove into the endzone from a yard out – blowing things open at 24-7 with 1:22 before halftime.

Union will pay a visit to Lumpkin County (1-8, 1-4) on Friday in the season finale where the Panther seniors are looking to equal last year's class as the winningest in program history with 32 victories over four years.

This Friday will also mark the 40th meeting between Union and Lumpkin.

The only team the Panthers have faced more is Rabun County (51 meetings).

The Panthers are currently 23-15-1 vs the Indians and have won three-straight. Prior to Union's current winning streak, Lumpkin rattled off six straight wins between 2002--2011.

The Panthers won the first 10 meetings vs the Indians between 1960--1971 before losing in 1972 and 1973.

Union was victorious in 1974 and 1975 but wouldn't win again until 1979 thanks to a pair of losses in 1976 and 1978 sandwiched around a 6-6 tie in 1977.

After a Panthers victory in 1979, the Indians, led by all state lineman and future Clemson Tiger, Brian Raber, took back-to-back wins (1980-81) before Union returned the favor in 1982 and 1983.

The series took a break from 1984-1989 until Lumpkin picked up a 12-7 victory in 1990. Union responded with four-straight (1991, 1996-98) but the Indians closed out the millennium with wins in 1999 and 2000.

The Panthers lone win of the previous decade came in 2001 as Lumpkin took all

six meetings between 2002--2011 while featuring all state selections David Richardson (2003), Dorian Dorsey (2004), Taylor Guthrie (2010), and Ian McIntosh (2011).

Union's 28-7 win in Dahlonega in 2014 sparked the current win streak that sits at three.

This year's Indians squad features a three-headed monster in the backfield with senior quarterback Chandler Woodham calling the shots.

Three different Indians have posted a 100-yard game this season while four different players have totaled more than 300 rushing yards on the season.

Seven different players have a rush of 11-plus yards, five have a carry of 30-plus and three have a run of 60-plus yards.

Woodham leads the way with 702 yards, junior Luke Smith has 609 yards despite missing a game, junior Evan Abernathy is at 444 yards on the year, and finally, senior Julian Hazen is at 323.

Defensively, senior Josh Chastain leads the team with 7 sacks for loss, Aaron Hopkins has 5 TFL and three other players each have 2 TFL.

Chastain and fellow senior Chaston Savage lead the team with two sacks each. Hopkins leads the way with 13 quarterback hurries on the year while Chastain has eight QBH and junior Dart Parker has five QBH.

Kicker Wesley Wells is perfect on extra points to go with two field goals (long 39 yards) this season. Meanwhile, 23 of his 29 kickoffs have resulted in touchbacks.

Kickoff is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Friday night at Lumpkin County High School in Dahlonega.

Team Totals	Union	Fannin
Total Plays	74	61
Total Yards	487	147
Passing Yards	236	33
Rushing Yards	251	114
First Downs	24	9
Third Down Efficiency	6-13 (46%)	2-14 (14%)
Fourth Down Efficiency	1-3 (33%)	1-5 (20%)

Union County High Players

Passing	Cp/Att	Yds	TD	Int	Lg
#8 C. Wright	17/27	236	1	-	60

Rushing

Att	Yds	TD	Long	Fum	
#8 C. Wright	19	145	1	27	-
#15 C. Dockrey	11	88	2	62	-
#24 C. Buzzard	8	18	1	13	-

Receiving

Rec	Yds	TD	Long	Fum	
#4 K. Hemphill	5	100	1	60	-
#21 S. Drake	4	55	-	23	-
#15 C. Dockrey	2	28	-	16	-
#22 A. Pattee	3	20	-	9	-
#84 K. Morlock	1	19	-	19	-
#24 C. Buzzard	2	14	-	7	-

Fannin County Players

Passing	Cp/Att	Yds	TD	Int	Lg
Rest of team	4/18	33	-	-	14

Rushing

Att	Yds	TD	Long	Fum	
Rest of team	38	114	2	21	-

Receiving

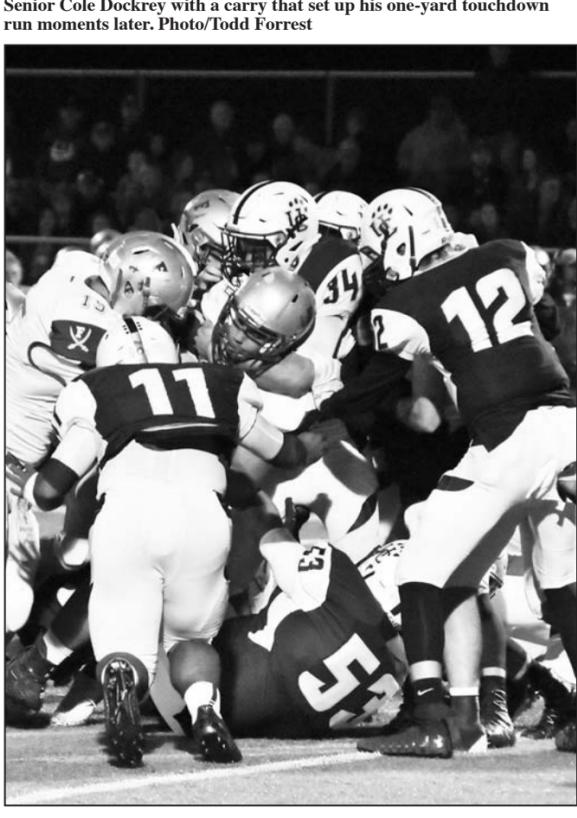
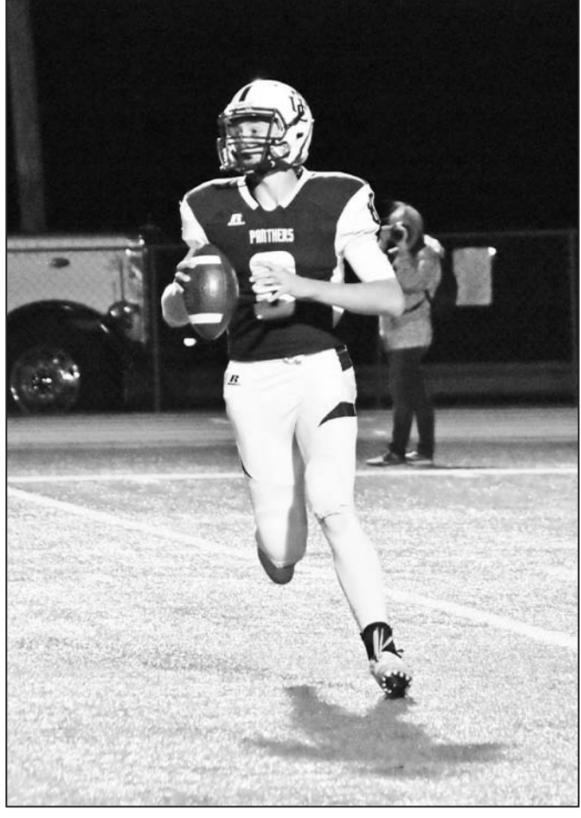
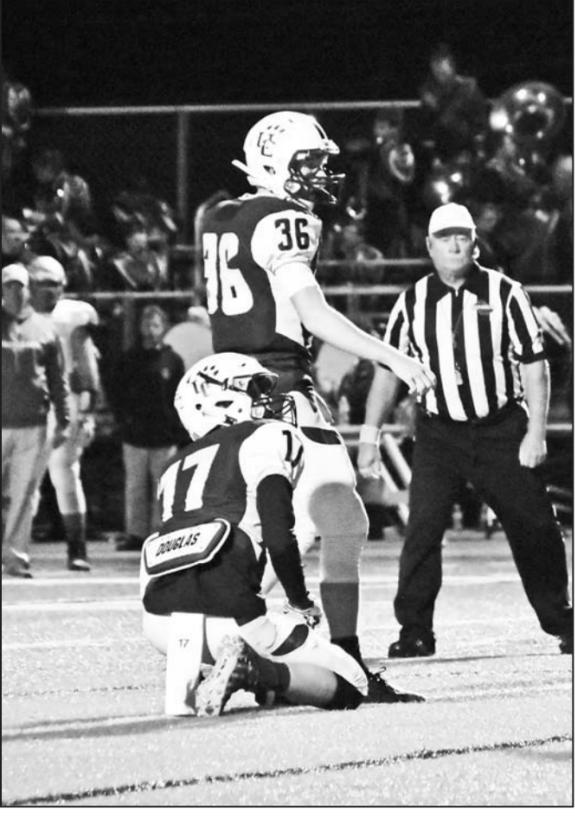
Rec	Yds	TD	Long	Fum	
Rest of team	4	33	-	14	-

Defense

	Tk	Ast	Sck	TFL
#34 B. Nelson	9	2	1	2
#32 J. Colwell	8	6	-	2
#2 C. Schafer	4	2	-	1
#7 A. Scott	4	-	-	-
#11 R. Banton	3	10	-	-
#74 N. Ledford	3	2	-	2
#17 P. Allison	3	2	-	-
#12 S. Dobbins	3	4	-	-
#15 C. Dockrey	2	2	-	-
#14 R. Barrett	2	2	-	-
#62 D. Ruff	1	5	-	-
#30 H. Kelley	1	1	-	-
#53 M. Beise	-	1	-	-



Senior Cole Dockrey with a carry that set up his one-yard touchdown run moments later. Photo/Todd Forrest



L-R: Brian Smith with a 27-yard field goal in the first quarter. Cole Wright looks for a receiver downfield during the second quarter. The Union County defense swarms a Fannin County ball carrier. Photos by Todd Forrest