

Sports

See the Sports Section at nghanews.com

Panther defense clamps down on Towns County in second half

Union County pulls away in third quarter; Indians unable to recover

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nghanews.com

Hiwassee - The Panthers (2-0) used a 16-6 run to open up a 46-32 advantage with 1:48 to play in the third quarter before cruising to a 58-51 victory over Towns County.

A back-and-forth first half came to a close with the Panthers holding a 30-26 lead behind 11 points from senior Crawford Colwell.

With 3:49 left in the third, Patrick Baggett was fouled on a 3-point attempt with his team leading 37-30. Despite only hitting 1-of-3 attempts, Baggett followed with consecutive treys then Pierson Allison knocked down a short jumper for a 46-32 Panther advantage.

The Indians outscored Union 5-2 over the final 90 seconds of the third to pull within 11 entering the fourth but the Panthers were able to maintain a comfortable margin for the majority of the final period.

A 15-footer from Allison at the 5:08 mark kept Union on-top by double-digits at 50-39. Baggett sank both attempts of a 1-and-1 to open up a 52-39 lead with 3:37 left.

A 5-0 Towns County spurt put the Indians back to 52-44 at the 2:00 mark but were unable to get any closer as junior Coleson Daniel hit 2-of-2 to stretch the lead back to 10 with 1:04 to play. An Indian trey cut the margin to seven but Baggett made 1-of-2 at the stripe with :45 left.

Towns pulled within six moments later but two Sawyer Drake free throws gave his team a 57-49 lead with :30 remaining. Another Coleson Daniel free throw put the game away with :18 to play



Coach Casey Jones looks on as Patrick Baggett and the Panthers try to run out the clock. Photo/Todd Forrest

and Union holding a 58-51 advantage.

With the game tied at 12-12 in the early going, Crawford Colwell converted a 3-point play for a 15-12 lead before Towns answered with a basket to pull within a point. As time expired in the first, Daniel gathered a Candler Colwell miss and went back up to beat the buzzer and give Union a 17-14 edge after one.

The first six points of the second belonged to the Indians as they opened up their largest lead of the night at 20-17, less than a minute into the period.

Crawford Colwell stopped the bleeding by driving inside for two. Moments later, trailing 22-19, he attacked the basket once again and scored on a left-handed layup.

A Sawyer Brey putback at the 4:19 mark put the Panthers back on top at 23-22.

Union continued to attack the basket as Candler Colwell pump-faked from the right wing, drove left and scored on a left-handed, up-and-under lay in.

With just over 3 minutes to play in the half, Allison answered a Towns basket by nailing an open trey from the corner that was created by a Crawford Colwell dribble-drive and kick-out.

Leading 28-24, both teams went cold over the final 180 seconds with one free throw each from Drake and Crawford Colwell allowing Union to take a 30-26 lead into the break.

The Indians' lone field goal in the final 3 minutes came on a layup from senior Zach Davenport after he regained control of a loose ball under the basket.

Baggett led the Panthers

with 16 points -- 13 in the second half -- while Crawford Colwell finished with 13 points, 3 rebounds, and 3 assists.

Drake would end up with 9 points, 10 rebounds, 3 assists, and 3 steals. Allison added 7 points and 4 boards.

Daniel scored 5 points on 3-of-5 shooting from the line. Candler Colwell had 4 points while Brey finished with 2 points, 2 assists, and 2 boards. Senior RJ Banton chipped in 2 points and 5 rebounds.

Union County's defensive effort was able to overcome a sub-par shooting performance, hitting just 59-percent (16-for-29) from the line and 33-percent (18-for-55) from the floor. They would, however, shoot a solid 38-percent (6-for-16) from long distance while limiting the Indians to just 3-of-13 (23-



RJ Banton takes a charge in the first half at Towns. Photo/Todd Forrest

percent) from beyond the arc.

Union was able to keep the Indians' offense out-of-sync for most of the night, limiting Davenport to just 6 points and 3 assists. Three days earlier he dropped 22 points and 10 dimes on Rabun County, becoming one of the fastest players in program history to reach 1,000 career points.

Towns' struggles spilled over to the free throw line, where they suffered through an abysmal 6-of-16 (38-percent) performance from the charity stripe.

The Indians outrebounded the Panthers 45-40 but Towns committed 16 turnovers to just seven for Union.

This week the Panthers will look to end a four-game skid to Rabun County, who is still without several key players due to the football team

reaching the State Semifinals.

Towns County was victorious at Rabun County, 79-65 in the season opener but the Wildacts are battle tested, despite their 0-3 record.

Rabun fell 72-47 to a very good Lakeview squad then led most of the game vs Class AAAAAA Habersham Central before letting it slip away late in a 57-51 loss.

The Wildcats still have plenty of firepower led by senior sharpshooter Tevan Dixon, along with juniors Jimmy Watts and Kasin Old, who have been carrying the load through three games.

The girls are scheduled to tip at 6 p.m. Tuesday with the guys to follow.

Following an off day on Friday, Union County returns home to host Towns County, also beginning at 6 p.m.

Lady Panthers hang on in OT after Towns rallies from 19 down

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nghanews.com

The Lady Panthers withstood a furious second half rally to force overtime and escape victorious against an inspired Towns County Lady Indians squad looking to halt an 11-game skid to Union and record its first win of the season.

Opening with a 9-2 run, the Lady Panthers led by as many as 12 in the first quarter (20-8) and 17 in the second (28-11) before taking a comfortable 32-16 advantage into the break.

With 4:07 to play in the third, Adeline Dockrey drilled a trey from the top of the key, then a putback from sophomore Kait McCarter pushed Union ahead 41-24 -- matching its largest lead of the game. Exactly 31 seconds later, sophomore Brooke Dockrey knocked down a pair at the line to open up a 19-point advantage, 43-24 with 2:54 remaining in the period.

It would be all Towns County over the final 10 minutes as they stormed ahead 50-47 with under a minute to play -- capping off a 26-4 outburst.

McCarter's deuce at the 3:23 mark of the third would be Union's final field goal until she scored again with 7:14 to play, extending the lead to 45-36.

Clinging to a 47-44 advantage with a little more than 2 minutes left, the Lady Panthers went inside to McCarter where she was hit with an offensive foul - sending her to the bench with five.

On the other end, Towns County freshman Kennedy Henson, who led all scorers with 26 points, missed a three but followed her shot and came up with the loose ball, resulting in a layup and a one-point game with 1:40 to go.

With a minute to play, and Union leading 47-46, Towns County called a timeout to set up the go-ahead basket. As the clock ticked under 50 seconds, Henson found fellow freshman Vanessa Floyd, who sank a wide open 15-footer from the corner, giving Towns its first lead of the game.

On the ensuing possession, Union coach Corey Garrett was forced to burn a timeout to avoid a 5-second violation but it wouldn't matter as the Lady Panthers turned it



Senior Bailey Daniel beats 54 Lady Indians to force overtime with a game-tying basket. Photo/Todd Forrest

over via a backcourt violation with 25 seconds to play.

With 18 seconds left, and Union forced to foul, Henson stepped to the line and calmly sank two free throws to give her team a 50-47 advantage.

Down three with 13 seconds remaining, junior Aubree Pack hit 1-of-2 from the line but was whistled for a lane violation after intentionally missing the second shot. Luckily, Union caught a break when the young and inexperienced Lady Indians attempted a full court pass that sailed over everyone out-of-bounds, awarding possession to the Lady Panthers under the basket with :10 left.

Needing two to force overtime, Union went to its three-year starter Bailey Daniel, who took the inbounds pass in the corner, dribbled out to the wing, and then went on the attack.

As she drove into the paint, five Lady Indians collapsed onto Daniel but nobody impeded her path to the basket, allowing her an open jumper from the left block to tie the game.

With 6 seconds remaining when Daniel's shot fell, Henson, managed to get off a desperation heave from mid-court that clanked off the side of the rim, sending the contest

into overtime.

Despite battling severe foul trouble during the fourth quarter and OT, the Lady Panthers were able to take control early in the overtime session from a Towns County squad that appeared fatigued and all out of ammo following its frantic comeback.

Junior Adeline Dockrey gave Union the lead with a free throw at the 3:23 mark then Daniel made it a 3-point game with another pull-up jumper from close range. Brooke Dockrey hit 1-of-2 from the charity stripe to give the Lady Panthers a 54-50 advantage with 90 seconds to play, then she hit 2-of-2 with 1:10 remaining to open up a 56-50 lead.

But the Lady Indians had one last rally left in the tank as they pulled within two at the 1-minute mark via a free throw, a Union turnover, and a Towns County trey. With her team clinging to a 56-54 advantage, Daniel calmly stepped the charity stripe and sank both free throws with :39 to play.

With :30 left, Daniel was hit with her fifth foul while going after a loose ball following a Lady Indian miss. Towns split a pair, then Adeline Dockrey was immediately sent to the line where she hit both free throws to put her team on top

60-55, which turned out to be the final score.

Pack led Union County with 14 points -- 11 coming in the first half. Daniel finished with 12 points -- six in the fourth quarter and overtime along with 7 boards and 3 steals. Brooke Dockrey added 11 points to go with 4 rebounds, 3 assists, and 2 steals while hitting 5-of-6 from the line.

In the early going, Daniel and Brooke Dockrey sparked the Lady Panthers to leads of 5-0 and 9-2 before Towns pulled within a point at 9-8. Union responded with an 11-0 run to open up a 20-8 advantage before the Lady Indians drilled a trey at the buzzer for a 20-11 score after one.

The second got underway with an 8-0 Lady Panther run, resulting in a Towns County timeout with 4:44 left in the half. The Lady Indians weathered the storm and trailed 31-16 before a Daniel free throw gave Union a 32-16 lead at the break.

McCarter had 8 points and 7 boards; Adeline Dockrey scored 6 points while leading the team with 10 rebounds and 4 assists; Andelin Hill chipped in 6 points on 4-of-4 shooting from the charity stripe, and Mary Wischmeyer finished with 2 points and 2 rebounds.

Union visits Rabun



Brooke Dockrey finished with 11 points at Towns Co. Photo/Todd Forrest



Aubree Pack led Union with 14 points while proving she can get the job done on the defensive end, as well. Photo/Todd Forrest

County on Tuesday, who routed Towns by nearly 40 points just three days prior to the overtime contest between the Lady Panthers and Lady Indians. On Saturday, Union and Towns will face off in a rematch in Blairsville.

Tip off is scheduled for 6 p.m. at both games.