

# Sports

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## How sweet it is! Arnold's free throws sink Lady Cats

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Just like the previous eight meetings with Rabun County, Union County (14-5, 3-1) found themselves behind the 8-ball for much of the evening and appeared to be headed for their ninth straight loss to the Lady Cats.

For 31 minutes and 56.5 seconds the Lady Panthers were unable to grab a lead. Union battled its way to within three points or less on 14 different occasions, but could never snatch a lead. Still trailing by a point with 12 seconds remaining, Union County Coach David Tucker called a timeout to draw up one final play.

Rabun seemed to have the perfect defensive scheme in place, a few passes 20-feet from the basket had the Lady Panthers scrambling – until Jeanelle Arnold decided that enough is enough. The senior took matters into her own hands and bulldozed her way into the paint where she was fouled on a shot attempt that rimmed out, but nevertheless, sent her to the line for two shots with 3.5 seconds to play.

Arnold had yet to attempt a free-throw all game, in fact, she had gone more than nine quarters without attempting a shot from the charity stripe.

Cool, calm, and collected, Arnold hit nothing but net on both attempts, giving Union its first and only lead. And as Rabun's desperation heave missed everything, Arnold's heroics proved to be the game winner.

"We're a better team when Jeanelle is on the floor," Coach Tucker said. "But tonight was a total team effort. Everyone did their part."

Senior Shawna Brown echoed her coaches' sentiments.

"We played as a team and all contributed to an awesome



Senior Jeanelle Arnold sinks her game winning free throw with 3.5 seconds remaining giving Union its first win over Rabun since 2009.



A tale of two sidelines: Coach Tucker and the Lady Panthers celebrate as Rabun County looks on disbelief after their desperation shot missed the target. Photo/Todd Forrest

win," she said.

In the early going it was the Lady Cats, the class of 8-AA for years, who were the well-oiled machine. Rabun leaped out to a 7-0 lead before Arnold put Union on the board at the 4:36 mark. Then 17 seconds later, Lauren Zollinger picked a Rabun pass and nailed

a pull up trey from the top of the key. Following a Rabun trey, Zollinger drove lane for two more and Brooke Maddox converted an offensive board into 2 points, making the score 16-9 Rabun, after one.

Carly Adams went to work early in the second hitting two from the stripe then knock-

ing down a trey bringing Union within two at 16-14, less than 3 minutes into the quarter. Five straight by the Lady Cats made it a 21-14 game until Brown's put back capped off Union's 7-point quarter.

Despite just 16 points in the first half, Union was still within striking distance at 24-



Carly Adams

16 at the break.

Zollinger opened the third frame with a trey and Arnold worked her way inside for two more, bringing Union to within three points for the first time since it was a 16-14 game. A Hannah Hughes free throw pulled the Lady Panthers to within two at 24-22



Lauren Zollinger

but six straight from the Lady Cats momentarily put Union's comeback attempts on hold.

Down 30-22, Maddox came to life and nailed consecutive threes, then a put back from Arnold capped off an 8-2 run to close the third. The sharpshooting sophomore and another hustle play from Arnold had the Lady Panthers down just 32-30 entering the final frame.

With momentum finally shading a little more purple than red, Union County seized the moment.

Zollinger quickly tied the game at 32-32 and for the first time in what seemed like an eternity, Union wasn't facing a deficit. Rabun took advantage of two trips to the line to open up a 35-32 lead but Adams went strong to the hoop for two more, further exposing Rabun's difficulty at stopping the Union guards' dribble penetration. Both teams exchanged free throws until the Lady Cats went inside for two at the 1:35 mark giving Rabun a 39-36 lead.

After Arnold missed a trey, Zollinger pilfered the Lady Cats and drove the left side of the lane for the hoop and the foul. The junior nailed

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## Rabun edges Panthers in Region 8-AA shootout

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Zach Odom and Rhett McCombs combined for 44 points, but at the end of the day, Union County (17-3, 3-2) could only muster one field goal in the final 7:40 as Rabun used its size advantage to take a 71-65 victory.

With 2:10 to play in the third quarter, Union held a 52-46 advantage on the heels of six straight from Zach Odom. The Wildcats stormed back with three straight buckets to tie things up at 52-52 entering the fourth.

Zach Odom opened the fourth with his third trey of the contest before Rabun used a 13-1 run, opening up a 65-56 lead with 4:28 remaining. James Rowe and Thomas Danek each sank 2-for-2 at the line, bringing Union within five at 65-60 at the 2:41 mark. Following a Rabun miss, McCombs connected from downtown, making it a 65-63 game with just over two minutes to play.

The Wildcats put the game away with a 6-2 spurt in the final 2:03 as two Rowe free throws were all Union could manage in the final 2:40.

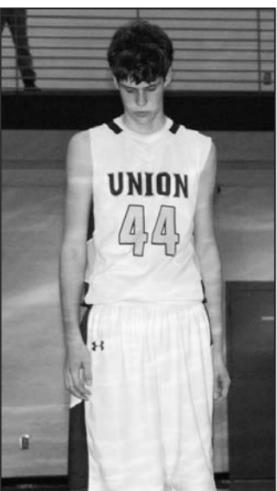
"The boys were hurt by the loss but it's supposed to hurt to lose," Coach Tucker said. "The easiest part is winning, but when you lose, you leave it all out there on the floor."

Coach Tucker added that this team did a little too much complaining to the officials, but told his players that you shouldn't be in position to leave a game in the hands of the referees.

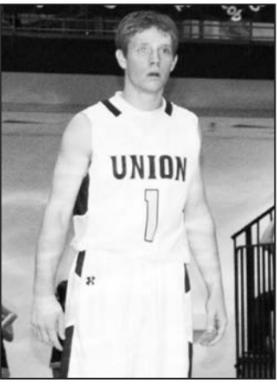
"We tried to do too much refereeing out there," he said. "Those refs do the best job that they can, but all in all, that was a very good team we were playing."

From the opening tip, it was obvious that this match up would be a physical and high scoring affair. Zach Odom scored 12 points in the first quarter and McCombs chipped in 6 points to give the Panthers a 22-18 lead after one.

The second quarter saw the contest turn into a grind-it-out defensive battle with foul trouble beginning to mount for the Panthers. Union still held a 34-31 edge at the break thanks



Thomas Danek



Zach Odom

to the Panther bench.

Thomas Danek scored in the paint, Tyler Odom knuckered down a corner trey and Hunter Hughes hit two free throws.

The third quarter was all Zach Odom and McCombs. The duo combined for all 18 Panther points in the quarter.

McCombs opened the third with a 3-point play, giving Union a 37-31 lead, the senior guard then nailed a trey - stretching the lead back to six at 40-34. A Zach Odom lay up and two lay ups from McCombs kept the Panthers out front before Zach Odom connected from long distance and converted a 3-point play giving Union its 52-46 lead, late in the third quarter.

Zach Odom led the Panthers with 23 points and 4 assists. McCombs accounted for 21 points and 2 steals.

Rowe scored five of his 10 points in the fourth quarter to go along with 8 boards, 3 assists, and a blocked shot.

Danek contributed 4 points, Tyler Odom had 3



James Rowe scores 2 of his 10 points in the first quarter against Rabun County on Tuesday. Photo/Todd Forrest.



Rhett McCombs applies full court pressure on a Wildcat ball handler during the second half. Photo/Todd Forrest

points, Dylan Coyne chipped in 2 points and 2 steals, while Hughes finished with 2 points. C.J. Byers was held scoreless but grabbed 6 boards.

The Panthers finished with nine treys for the game and went 14-18 at the line. Unfortunately, it was the Wildcats who did most of their damage at the line with the entire Panther starting-five either fouled out or finishing with four fouls.

Union will look to avoid its first two-game losing skid

of the season as they travel to Jefferson on Tuesday. The Panthers will then be looking for revenge as they visit Rabun County on Friday night.

Union's game at Washington-Wilkes last Friday was canceled due to winter weather. The make up date will take place on Saturday Feb. 9th, if needed. If the game will have no impact on the Region standings, the Panthers won't be required to make the long journey south.

Joe Collins

**Tips from the Range**

Every golfer's swing is different and therefore each individual player hits the ball differently.

Some golfers hit the ball high and others hit the ball low. It all depends on whether or not you swing with a steep arc or if you swing with a flat arc. A player's swing plays a major role in ball flight but so does wrist action, center of gravity, arm rotation and shoulder turn.

All these mechanics can affect the flight of the ball but none more so than shoulder rotation. The shoulder's rotation around the spine has a direct influence on the height that a player hits the ball, so it stands to reason that if you are looking to change your normal ball flight then change the plane of your shoulder rotation.

To understand how this works we must first look at how the shoulder rotation affects the arm path in relation to the backswing.

Bubba Watson is a good example of what we are looking at. He has a wide variety of shots to play with, more than many other players on the P.G.A. Tour. He has a steep backswing that takes the front shoulder toward the ball on the initial start of his take away and this causes his hands to finish really high. Therefore, he hits it high.

He also has a lot of shots that he will play with a lower trajectory and to do this he keeps his front shoulder higher during the start of the backswing which flattens his backswing arc. This allows him to finish a little lower in the follow through which promotes a lower ball flight. Of the two different shoulder planes, the steeper is more accurate allowing him to bomb those huge drives into some really tight areas.

Many Europeans have a shallower take away and hit the ball lower because of the windy conditions they have to deal with week in and week out on the European Tour. They don't allow the front shoulder to move in a downward direction toward the ball on the start of the backswing. They focus

on keeping the front shoulder higher on the backswing as opposed to letting it drop down and under the chin. The higher shoulder position makes the path of the arms lower in the backswing which promotes a flatter plane and a lower ball flight. You can see a good example of this in Ian Poulter's swing. His hands will finish lower than Watson's and this causes him to hit it much lower. You can see the differences on the YouTube video of them teeing off together in the 2012 Ryder Cup.

When you are working on this, beware that making a steeper turn in the backswing will tend to move your center of gravity to the balls of your feet. This will cause balance issues and that must be avoided at all cost. Bubba's tee ball on hole #10 in the Masters playoff this year is an example of this balance issue. His steep shoulder turn caused his center of gravity to move to the balls of his feet and he came over the top and pulled his drive into the woods on the right side of the fairway. He was trying to hit a high fade and he simply lost it out of the top. But, his recovery was very high caused by a proper steep turn with the shoulders and good balance and thus he won his first major championship.

It is vital that you stay away from the ball on the backswing in order for the path of the arms to move from the inside on the downswing which promotes good extension through impact. A higher front shoulder on the backswing helps you stay in balance better but it tends to cause you to hit the ball lower. If you use a higher front shoulder on the backswing and you want to hit it higher, you will throw the hands through impact and that will cause all sorts of problems.

Many will tell you that if you want to hit the ball lower that you should move the ball back in your stance and that is correct. However, you have to do this in conjunction with another swing thought to reduce spin and I will cover that next week.

Remember the old cliché that practice makes perfect so get out and practice so that your time on the links will be more enjoyable.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!