

Sports

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Lady Panthers set new record with perfect final week of regular season

By Todd Forrest
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With four wins by double digits to close out the regular season, the Union County Lady Panthers (15-8, 8-2) secured the second seed and a bye into the semifinals during this week's Region 8-AA Tournament, which guarantees Union a team record sixth consecutive trip to the State Tournament.

The Lady Panthers' six-year run that began early this decade surpassed the mark set from 1970-74 when the Union County girls basketball program reached five-in-a-row.

The game has changed a lot since the early-70's when high school girls basketball was played 3-on-3 in a half court setting with rules that allowed the coach to choose who shot the free throws, regardless of who was fouled. That format usually resulted in a remarkable discrepancy between a team's leading scorer and the rest of the squad thanks to the star player taking the majority of the foul shots.

Fast-forwarding to present-day, Union County sophomore Bailey Daniel has been putting up 3-on-3 scoring numbers over the last week - scoring 78 points combined in the Lady Panthers' four wins to close out the regular season.

From long distance, she's hovering around 50 percent with 16 treys on 33 attempts.

Union County opened the week with a 64-41 home win over Greene County in a Monday makeup game. Daniel led all scorers with 23 points on 3-of-5 shooting from beyond the arc and a perfect 8-for-8 at the charity stripe.

Seniors Kim Coyne and Stephanie Busse added 12 and 10 points respectively.

On Wednesday, Oglethorpe County came to Blairsville in another makeup contest and Daniel spoiled Lady Patriots Head Coach Mike Townson's homecoming with 20 points and 6 steals while hitting 5-of-10



Union will need Bailey Daniel to continue her hot shooting to have a shot at toppling Rabun for 8-AA supremacy. Photo/Todd Forrest

from deep. Senior Layne Colwell got in on the 3-point barrage with four treys and 14 points. Union finished the game with a season-high 13 treys and pulled away in the third quarter on their way to a 54-26 victory.

Friday night saw the Lady Panthers visit Social Circle and come away with a hard-fought, low-scoring win. Once again Union used a third quarter surge to put some distances between themselves and the Lady Redskins in a 36-24 win.

Daniel led the way with 16 points on four treys.

Finally, the week concluded with another makeup game vs Washington-Wilkes, but this time it was played at a neutral site after there were no officials at the previous meeting.

Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville was the site of the Lady Panthers' regular season finale, and early on, it was Wilkes that held the upper hand.

After playing damage control in the opening frame,

Union countered with a 17-3 run in the second quarter to give them the upper hand at 23-16 entering the break. They would go on to win 36-26 as Daniel knocked down four threes on her way to a 19-point performance.

With a first round bye and their ticket to State punched, the Lady Panthers will await the victors of Social Circle vs Oglethorpe County on Friday. A victory in the semis will send Union to its second straight Region 8-AA Championship Game where the host Rabun County will most likely await a challenger to their 8-AA throne.

UC 64, Greene 41: Layne Colwell 9 points, Ashley Fair 4, Logan Colwell 3, Jillian Lawn 2, Grace Wishmeyer 1.

UC 54, Oglethorpe 26: Coyne 9 points, Busse 6, Lawn 3, Maddie Sutton 2.

UC 36, Social 24: Coyne 7 points, Busse 6, Layne Colwell 5, Fair 2.

UC 36, Wilkes 26: Busse 7 points, Lawn 5, Layne Colwell 3, Fair 1.

Panthers ride winning streak into this week's Region 8-AA Tourney

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Entering last week, Union County had dropped four straight and fell from atop the Region 8-AA standings and were suddenly thrust into a battle to avoid a last place finish.

What a difference a week can make.

Sitting at 4-4 in 8-AA and 9-12 overall, Panthers Head Coach Casey Jones and his squad were left scratching their heads, wondering how to right the ship that was going taking on water at a rapid rate.

Four wins later, Union's record (13-12) is back above .500 with a very solid 8-4 Region record that resulted in a tie for second with Rabun County.

However, the Wildcats possessed the tiebreaker with a win over top-seed Riverside, who swept the Panthers.

The turnaround began Monday when Union hosted Greene County, a team it handled with ease in Greensboro back in December.

And the first half belonged to the Panthers as they opened up a 12-point advantage and held a comfortable 30-23 lead at the break despite playing without sophomore guard Candler Colwell.

But Greene County rallied to take a 35-34 lead following consecutive treys that erased a 34-29 Union lead in less than 50 seconds. Entering the fourth quarter, the Tigers were on top 41-40.

Greene scored to open the fourth but the duo of senior Chase Shook and junior Lawson Baenninger decided to take over and the Panthers escaped with a 53-48 win.

When the dust settled Shook and Baenninger combined for 42 of their team's 53 points. Shook led all scorers with 22 while Baenninger added 20.

With the losing streak behind them, Union County was regaining its confidence and two days later, they took Oglethorpe



Crawford Colwell goes up strong vs Greene Co. Photo/Todd Forrest

to the woodshed, 52-35. In a game that was never close in the second half, Shook and Baenninger did most of the heavy lifting once again. The senior big man poured in 17 points while Baenninger chipped in a steady 12.

Sophomore Crawford Colwell and senior Matthew Rich scored 8 points each.

On Friday night, the resurgent Panthers sought revenge when they visited Social Circle, and it was served up nice and cold to the tune of a 50-40 UC victory.

After three, Union was clinging to a 39-33 advantage but this time around, the Panthers delivered in crunch time.

Matthew Rich delivered a career-high 20 points, including a 9-of-12 fourth quarter performance at the foul line to put the exclamation point on a 12-of-15 game from the stripe.

Shook, Baenninger, and senior Andrew Brown each knocked down shots at the line to help Union build a double-digit lead.

The Redskins' Deion Head, who almost single-handedly carried his team to victory in Blairsville, was held in check.

The junior scoring ma-

chine finished with 19 but he was limited by to only five field goals for the game and a goose egg coming from long distance.

In a neutral site makeup game with Washington-Wilkes on Saturday that was a result of the officiating mishap, debacle, whatever you want to call it, Union was a win away from finishing tied for second in 8-AA.

After opening up a double-digit advantage in the second quarter, the Panthers held off the Tigers 54-44 to conclude the regular season with four straight W's.

Baenninger led the way with 14 points but he got plenty of assistance from Shook and Crawford Colwell, who each posted a 12 point game.

Sophomore Patrick Baggett scored 6 points and senior Lance Rich had 5 points.

Postseason action opens in Rabun County on Wednesday at 5:30 when the Panthers face Washington-Wilkes for the fourth consecutive postseason.

A win and Union will meet the winner of Social Circle and Rabun.

Top-seed Riverside receives a bye and like the Lady Panthers, are guaranteed a spot in the State Tournament.

Signing Day 2016: Mancuso makes it official; chooses Richmond

By Todd Forrest
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Union County quarterback Joseph Mancuso has honored his verbal commitment to play at Richmond University in Virginia by signing on to play for Head Coach Danny Rocco and the Spiders.

"I stayed firm with Richmond the entire time and was solid with my choice," said Mancuso regarding his verbal commitment made to Richmond last September.

When Mancuso committed to the Spiders they were ranked No. 22 in the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) but finished in the Top four after reaching the National Semifinals where they lost to FCS powerhouse and eventual National Champions North Dakota State, who won their fifth straight FCS title.

"They made a great run but it was just unfortunate who they played," Mancuso said.

North Dakota State quarterback Carson Wentz is a potential first round draft pick in the upcoming NFL Draft, and former Delaware quarterback and Super Bowl XLVII MVP

Joe Flacco have proven that Division II talent can go on to compete, not only at the next level, but at the highest levels of the league.

Mancuso is listed as a Pro Style quarterback but believes the development of his rushing ability under the spread option offense in high school will provide that extra element that Coach Rocco desires in his QBs.

"Richmond runs a Pro Style offense but when you get pressured you have to be

able to escape," Mancuso said. "Richmond's quarterback was very quick and elusive and had that escape ability, but I think speed and footwork are important no matter what type of offense you are running."

Following graduation in May, Mancuso, who has attended football camps at the university, plans on enrolling over the summer, allowing him to take a class and work out with the team.

The starter at Richmond will be a junior this fall so

Mancuso's role during his freshman year is still undecided.

"They haven't told me anything and I don't know if they are going to redshirt me," he said. "I will travel with the team to gain experience and learn as much as I can."

At the moment, Mancuso is a member of the Panthers basketball squad and at the conclusion of the season, he will join new Head Coach Robby Roxbury's baseball squad where he anchors the

pitching staff and provides power to the middle of the lineup.

An athlete of Mancuso's caliber doesn't come around very often in a small mountain town and we will look forward to following his career. But according to Mancuso, without the support of his coaches, teammates, friends, family, and the community, he wouldn't be where he is today.

"I want to thank everyone," he said. "Everyone wants to see me succeed. It's really

great to have all those guys behind me and pushing me to get better.

"I can't say enough about this community. All of things they have done for me, coming to the games supporting me. I have to thank my best friends Nic (Rodriguez) and Chris (Drost), my parents, my family and everyone for everything that they have done and I can't forget about the coaches and all they've done to help me succeed."



The newest member of the Richmond Spiders; Joseph Mancuso



Joseph Mancuso with his Union County High School coaches.



Joseph Mancuso with his parents and brother on National Signing Day 2016 after he signed his name on the dotted line to play at Richmond

Bowling scores

Monday Night Men's: Jim Kidder 219, Mel White 204, Bart Rodgers 234, Doug Tanner 205, 217, 246, Series 668, Ryan West 241, Chris Ellinwood 255, 208, Taz Matetzschk 226, 234, BJ Gilbert 203, 258, Series 652, Bill Smith 211, Dewey Allen 200, Curtis Corn 206, Bob Bischoff 224, 265, Series 648, Greg Whittenburg 232, 207, Ernest Rice 205, Del Neiffer 233, Derrick Rice 237, 226, 267, Series 730.

Monday Night Ladies: Nell Rice 212, Sarah Chumbley 193, 187, Series 534, Susan Ganitch 185, Inez Bergstrom 182.

Young at Hearts Seniors: Stanley Tyler 227, Bob Landis 204, Ron Wingate 225, 203, Bonnie Magar 204, Del Neiffer 202, 215, 2216, Series 633, Ron Gaucher 211, 193, 212, Series 616, Mo Rodgers 206, Bart Rodgers 213, Paul Napolitano 224.

Thursday Night Fun Mixed: Doug Roberts 203, Dewey Allen 206, 216, 213, Series 635, Jackie Moller 195, Bob Bischoff 234, Joe Chubberly 227, Rainy Hughs 209, 205, Series 571, Stanley Tyler 212, Susan Ganitch 211, Tony Lynch 217, Tim McVay 218, Chuck Reeves 205, Bonnell Thomas 280, 174, 193, Series 647.

Mountain High Hikers Hiking Club

Mountain High Hikers schedule two hikes every Tuesday, one long and one shorter, as well as occasional specialty hikes. Weekly trail maintenance trips are scheduled every Thursday.

Come enjoy the beautiful mountains and waterfalls we have here. Check the website www.mountainhighhikers.org for schedule and contact numbers. NT(Feb10.21)CA

Trout stocking
January 29, 2016

Delayed Harvest Trout Stocking
On January 29, 2016, Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery Project Leader Kelly Taylor stocked Rainbow Trout into the Toccoa River for Georgia's Delayed Harvest (DH). For more information and regulations on fishing Delayed Harvest areas in Georgia, go to www.gofishgeorgia.com or contact Georgia Department of Natural Resources 800-366-2661 or Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery 706-838-4723. NT(Feb10.22)CA