

Sports

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Lady Panthers' basketball season comes to a close at Bremen

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Bremen - All good things must come to an end and the Union County Lady Panthers' faced that reality last Tuesday, falling 69-42 in the opening round of the State Tournament.

The Bremen Lady Blue Devils used a 16-4 third quarter run to break things open and then closed out the Lady Panthers with a 13-2 spurt early in the fourth.

After traveling more than three hours for the third time in five days, Union faced a different type of monster than it had seen in the Region 8-AA Tournament - a team that blended a significant size advantage with speed and quality shooters.

"I don't know if we were tired from traveling so much or if it was something else," Union Head Coach David Tucker said. "It was a long ride, but I'm not the type to make excuses and Bremen had two or three really good players. We had a long ride to Greene County and we played well down there. But it could have caught up to us. We still gave it our all. Like we always do."

Union hung tough early on, but couldn't slow down the Lady Blue Devil attack.

Despite falling behind 4-0, Union answered with a 7-2 run to take its first and only lead of the contest at 7-6.

A free throw by Jeanelle Arnold and consecutive treys from Lauren Zollinger and Brooke Maddox gave Union its one point advantage. Unfortunately the Lady Panther shooters would go ice cold for the remainder of the half as Bremen held a 10-7 lead after one and 23-14 at the half.

Alone three by Zollinger was Union's only points outside the paint for the final 11:13 of the first half.

"We didn't shoot well early on and if we had made



Lauren Zollinger led the Lady Panthers with 11 points on 3-for-9 shooting from 3-point land. Photo/Todd Forrest

our lay ups we would've been ahead," Coach Tucker said.

Bremen ran off 8 unanswered points after Union took its lead. Trailing 14-7, Maddox picked a Lady Blue Devil ball handler for a lay up at the 5:44 mark.

A Bremen trey and a Lady Panther turnover followed, allowing the Lady Blue Devils to open a 10-point advantage at 19-9 with 2:54 left in the half.

Zollinger's trey and a driving lay up from Maddox in the closing seconds of the half got Union within nine at 23-14 entering the break.

Bremen's size allowed the home team to take advantage of several put backs while limiting Union to one-and-done on the offensive end.

"That girl they had inside was over 6-feet tall and Shawna (Brown) did a good job with her, but we just stood around and watched too much when it came to rebounding," Coach Tucker said. "Whenever your legs are gone, that's usually what happens. You stand

around and watch."

The Lady Panther shooters began to heat up in the third quarter, but stops were hard to come by on the defensive end.

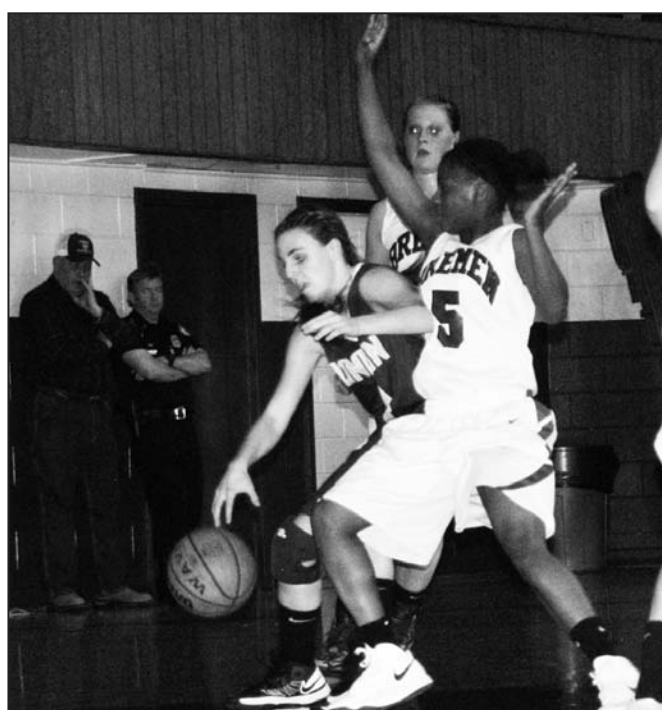
Union connected on five treys in the third for a 21-point quarter, unfortunately, the Lady Panthers allowed 26, including the 16-4 run.

Trailing 25-14, Carly Adams found her stroke and nailed the first of her two treys in the quarter.

Zollinger connected from the corner but Bremen continued to score at will.

The Lady Blue Devils opened up a 38-20 advantage with 4:36 remaining in the quarter before two Maddox free throws and a drive by Arnold trimmed it to a 14-point game.

Adams struck again from long distance, but not before Bremen rattled off 5-straight points. Hannah Hughes would get on track and hit from downtown, then another deuce from Arnold kept Union within 15. The senior guard would connect from beyond the arc as the third quarter buzzer sounded



Carly Adams takes it strong to the hoop for two of her 10 points. She also hit 2-of-3 from long range. Photo/Todd Forrest

with Union facing a decided disadvantage at 49-35.

"We weren't able to slow them down," Coach Tucker said. "Their guards did a good job of penetrating. We were able to take No. 22 away but the other girls heated up. You could tell which end of the gym they practice on because they shot a lot better on the other goal."

The fourth quarter saw a dramatic cool-down of the Lady Panther shooters as Bremen opened with a 13-2 run.

"I tried to play man-to-man on defense, but they were too quick," Coach Tucker said. "I should have just stayed with our 1-1-3 (zone). But that's all hindsight and you know what they say about hindsight."

Adams did her best to keep Union in the game. The senior scored on a dribble-drive and an offensive board, but despite her efforts, Union still struggled to find an answer on the defensive end.

Behind 66-41, Arnold went to the line for the final time as a Lady Panther and scored Union's last point of

the season with 32 ticks left on the clock.

Zollinger led the Lady Panthers with 11 points and 6 assists, while Adams scored 10. Arnold went for 9 points and 6 boards, Maddox added 9 points and 3 steals. Hughes chipped in 3 points, 2 steals, and blocked a shot. Madison Rich hauled in 4 boards, and Ariel Maurer also blocked a shot.

The Lady Panther Senior Class can still hold its head high knowing that they appeared in three State Tournaments. And despite losing four uber-talented senior starters from last season, this class assumed a leadership role and proved that Union County no longer rebuilds, they now reload.

The job that the Lady Panthers and Coach Tucker did in 2012-13, ignoring the naysayers, while giving us a sneak peak at the sunny days ahead for Union County Lady Panther basketball is remarkable.

"Well, this is a remarkable group of girls with a remarkable senior class," Coach Tucker said. "They were always

at practice and did whatever was asked of them.

"It was a very gratifying season. They all played well and had a very good J.V. season. I think we're in pretty good shape."

Along the way, Union County took on a very tough schedule that included a win over Region 8-A Champion Towns County. They faced a Class AAAA Sweet 16 team in Chestatee for a scrimmage and a Class AAA Elite 8 team in Dawson County.

"To come in first in the Region and come in second at the Battle of the States makes it hard to find anything negative about the season," Tucker said. "Some people say that we lost some that we should've won, but we won some that we should have lost, and those were simply because of hustle."

Union would play two more State Playoff teams with White County and Fannin County each reaching the Class AAA field of 32.

The Lady Panthers also played its entire postseason without the services of sophomore post Lisa Nalaschi, who was beginning to find her form late in the season.

"If we would've had Lisa, things could have been different," Tucker said. "People don't realize how big of a deal it is to lose her. We could always go to her to take care of the (other teams') bigs."

Union County will return the 8-AA Player of the Year in Zollinger. Their third leading scorer, Maddox, is just a sophomore. Maurer, the team's leading shot blocker is also a sophomore.

"We have 'Lefty' (Kaitlyn Day) coming back, Madison (Rich) and Allie (Stroman) and they can all shoot the ball," Tucker said. "We'll have some freshmen and sophomores next year that will come in and get their feet wet. It's going to be a good year and I'm already looking forward to it."

Soccer teams off to 2-0 start Panther arms fire two gems

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

The Union County soccer program hasn't missed a beat thus far with Head Coach Tim Hunter back at the helm.

The Lady Panthers picked up a pair of victories last week. Union County whacked Pickens 4-0 then held off Towns County in a 2-1 victory in Blairsville.

The boys defeated Pickens County 4-1 then routed Towns County 5-0 in a game shortened by weather.

In the Lady Panthers' victory over Towns, Camryn Carter connected on the game winner with 6:07 left in the game.

The teams were all even after Taylor Burton tried to clear the ball from in front of the Union County goal, the ball connected with the face of Towns County player and the ricochet ended up in the net, resulting in a 1-1 at the 24-minute mark of the second half.

Union County struck took an early lead when Kristena Zeger assisted Maddy Morlock at the 4:33 mark of the first.

"The keeper dropped the shot and Maddy pounced on it for the first goal," Coach Hunter said. "The girls were really in for a fight against a very good Towns team. We played very hard although we didn't always play well."

"Ansley Garrison who is a freshman had the job of man marking Faith Robinson from Towns, who is their best offensive player. Mikala Jones played her best game as a varsity player vs Towns."

In the 4-0 win over Pickens, Erin Innis scored 2 goals with one coming on a penalty kick. Marissa Akin and Carter each added a goal. Marissa Spaulding and Zeger had an assist.

"We pretty much dominated possession, played a good game in regards to passing the ball and finding open players," Coach Hunter said.

The boys squad dominated Towns from the get go. Union jumped out to a 3-0 lead at the break and used 2 quick goals early in the second half to put the Indians away.



Camryn Carter sends one towards the goal during the second half of Union's 2-1 win over Towns County. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union County capped off the evening with a sweep of Towns County after the Panthers prevailed 5-0 on Thursday. Photo/Joe Collins

The game was eventually called off by both coaches due to lightening.

Eric Hougrand scored a goal with 2 assists, Jesus Mancillas scored twice, while Jair Gonzalez and T.J. Smith added a goal each.

Kyle Hamby, Keaton Dyer, Brandon Pestana, and Gonzalez each had an assist.

"We got a 3-0 lead in the first half but we were not playing well and we're not passing the ball well," Coach Hunter said. "We had to make some adjustments at the half and we stormed back out with 2 quick goals. Then we were able to let many of our substitutes play the remainder of the game."

At Pickens County, Smith

picked up a hat trick with three goals in Union's 4-1 win.

Gonzalez added a goal, Hougrand had two assists, and Mancillas had one assist.

"Tim McKenna did a stellar job on Pickens' forward who is a huge impact player," Hunter said. "Tim is a very talented player, but I have never seen him play with the heart and the determination that he showed. He really stepped up and was a huge key to us winning the ball game."

"Justin Eigel made some huge saves including one would be goal that I'm still not sure how he deflected. He definitely did not play like a freshman. We beat a really good and physical Pickens team"

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Union County baseball is off and running after a pair of shutout victories over Towns County and North Murray.

Last Monday, Jared Croskey, Lane Everett, and Calvin Duckworth combined for a one-hitter in the Panthers' 6-0 home field win over rival Towns County.

Senior T Bentley and sophomore Chase Barnett ignited the Panther offense with 2 RBIs each.

Meanwhile, Duckworth helped his own cause by scoring 2 runs, and driving home another.

From the mound, Croskey went 3 innings in the win, allowing 2 walks and striking out 3. Everett fanned 6 in 2 innings of work, and Duckworth struck out 4 and allowed 1 hit in his 2 innings.

The Panthers posted 2 runs in the bottom of the second when Everett reached on an error and Duckworth singled to right, scoring Everett.

A Cody Davenport ground out advanced Duckworth, then a two-out single by Barnett brought home Duckworth.

Union added another in the third when Robert Prunier and Wes Aulet led off with consecutive singles. Bentley hit into a fielder's choice, bringing in Prunier.

Cooper Patton reached on an error with one out in the fifth, stole second, then came around to score on another Bentley single.

The Panthers tacked on two more insurance runs during a sixth inning that saw Jackson Burks open with a single. Duckworth walked and Davenport was hit by a pitch to load up the bases.

Barnett would reach on a fielder's choice, scoring Burks. Croskey then grounded out to shortstop but Duckworth scored on the throw.

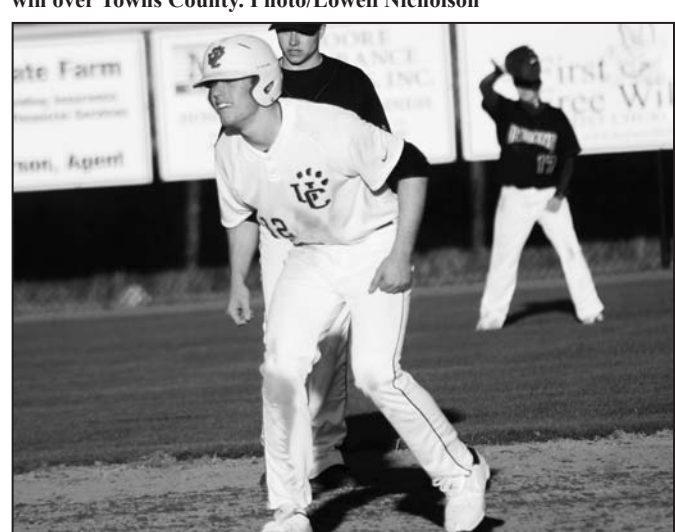
Duckworth would then sit the Indians down in order with a ground out and two strikeouts in the seventh inning.

Prunier, Bentley, and Everett added a stolen base each for the Panthers.

On Thursday, Union



Lane Everett fires a pitch during Union County's season opening 6-0 win over Towns County. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Senior T Bentley leads off from second base. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

County traveled to Chatsworth to take on Class AAA's North Murray.

Union put up 2 runs in the first, 3 in the fourth, and 1 in the fifth to cruise to another 6-0 victory as the Panthers welcomed Zach Odom back to the diamond.

The senior shortstop doubled, scored, and drove in a run. Prunier, Aulet, Everett, Duckworth, and Barnett also added an RBI each for the Panthers.

Everett picked up the win going 4 innings, allowing just 2 hits and fanning 3. Tyler Odom and Joseph Mancuso each worked an inning of no-hit relief for Union.

Union jumped out in front early after Zach Odom and Prunier walked to open the game. Aulet singled home Zach Odom. Later an Everett sacri-

fice fly would score Prunier.

Union's three-run fourth began with Croskey reaching on an error. Burks and Barnett singled to score Croskey. Zach Odom doubled home Burks, and Prunier reached on an error that brought pinch runner Garrett Nixon around to score.

Bentley and Everett singled to open the fifth and Bentley would score on a sacrifice fly by Duckworth.

"One week into the season, our team is progressing nicely," first-year Head Coach Brandon Bradburn said. "One thing that stands out early is how well our defense is playing considering the amount of rain we have had and limited time on the field. We just need to make sure we keep getting better every practice and game. We enjoy winning early, but we want our best baseball to be ahead of us."