

Sports

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Seiler delivers in OT as Panthers stun Social Circle

Union escapes Fannin County with a penalty kick victory

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

The Union County Panthers rebounded from their only loss of the season with a pair of overtime wins, with the second being a come-from-behind, double-overtime, Region 8-AA barnburner with Social Circle in front of the home crowd on Friday night.

Trailing 2-0 in the 24th minute, a 1-2 record in Region play was looking like a real possibility until a Sam Seiler goal in the 33rd minute cut the Redskins' lead in half.

Parker McCombs beat two defenders in the opening minutes of the second to tie the score at 2-2. And that would be the final goal of regulation.

After 80 minutes of action and a 5-minute overtime session, the score was still deadlocked.

Senior keeper Justin Eigel kept Social Circle off the board long enough for Seiler to come to the rescue.

With just over 2 minutes left in the second overtime period, Seiler's left foot drilled a shot past the keeper from the right hash mark, 18 yards away.

Leading for the first time all night, Union needed to keep



Lawson Baenninger (left #1) and Sam Seiler (right #4) are coming off a week that saw the junior duo deliver in the clutch. Photo/Todd Forrest

the Redskins off the board for 132 seconds and they did just that, despite Social Circle getting off a shot that missed to the right, only seconds after Seiler's goal. The Redskins' final opportunity to

send the game into penalty kicks came with 29 ticks on the clock when a free kick sailed wide left, and as the horn sounded, Seiler was mobbed on the sideline by his Panther teammates.

"While winning in overtime is one of the most exciting events possible, I'm quite certain that those games take many years off my life," Union Head Coach Tim Hunter said.

On the other side, a distraught Redskins squad watched in stunned silence while a few players were lying face down on the field of play after collapsing in the exact spot they were standing

when the clock hit zero.

Earlier in the week, Union traveled to Blue Ridge to take on the Rebels, who they tied 1-1 in the season opener.

This time around, goals were at an even greater premium as the game ended scoreless after 80 minutes of regulation and 10 minutes of overtime.

"They played a rather unorthodox formation against us to minimize our shooting opportunities," Hunter said. "We fought hard the entire game but neither team was able to create a positive scoring opportunity."

As the game went to penalty kicks, Lawson Baenninger delivered the game winner as the Panthers took the PK session 4-2.

Seiler, Matthew Van Pelt and Adam Bachman all connected on PKs and Eigel blocked a remarkable 2-of-4 Rebel shots.

Up next for Union is another Region 8-AA clash with Rabun County at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on Thursday at 7 p.m.

Rabun is currently 1-4 but have played a tough non-region schedule. On Friday, the Panthers travel to Towns County for a 7 p.m. make-up game. The Indians (1-2) are coming off a 2-0 win over George Walton Academy.

Lady Panthers improve to 4-0; Rabun and Towns up next

Union Head Coach Tim Hunter records win No. 200 at Fannin County

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

The Lady Panthers (4-0, 2-0) notched a pair of shutouts last week with the first coming at Fannin County where the 4-0 victory was the 200th of Union Head Coach Tim Hunter's career.

On Friday, the Lady Panthers hosted Social Circle, who entered with a 3-2 record, and for the entire first half, they played Union dead-even.

Except for the final 18 seconds.

In the game's 40th minute, Rachel Vester connected after the Lady Panthers turned a Lady Redskins' corner kick into points as Vester streaked down the field and beat the keeper 1-on-1 to give Union the score entering the intermission.

The Lady Panthers made it a 2-0 game in the 63rd minute when Vester found Madison Yost in the middle of the field for another goal.

Union struck just 74 seconds later when Vester and Yost hooked up one more time.

This time, Brenna Innis deflected Vester whose shot was deflected off the keeper's hands and Yost pounced on the loose ball and scored from point-blank range.

At Fannin, like the Social



Braedyn Robbins in the win vs Social Circle. Photo/Todd Forrest

Circle game, the Lady Panthers were unable to find their groove on the offensive end until one half of action was in the books.

The second half saw the game remain scoreless until the 66th minute when Yost fed Vester to make it a 1-0 game.

Union struck again just 43

seconds later when Yost found Braedyn Robbins for a goal.

Vester scored again off an assist from Anzly Sherman in the 75th minute. The final goal was unassisted when Brenna Innis made it a 4-0 game in the 76th minute.

"We pretty much domi-



Joanna Irvin during the win over Social Circle. Photo/Todd Forrest

nated possession and they didn't have many scoring opportunities," said Union County Head Coach Tim Hunter. "They were very athletic and physical in midfield and their keeper was about as good as you will face. She really kept them in the game early.

"We went into halftime tied 0-0 but we still felt good because we had put some great shots on goal and had not allowed many opportunities.

"We finally opened up some scoring opportunities late in the second half."

Hunter's 100th career win

came in 2007 vs Hebron Christian at home. When asked about getting close to 200, Hunter said that he knew he was nearing the milestone at the end of last year.

"I had added up my win totals last year and I knew I was at 196 at the end of last season," he said. "Then I got to thinking in between games and I said, 'I think I just got my 200th win.' I added everything up while we were eating after both games and I knew for sure then."

When asked what he loved most about his job, all of his players came to mind.

"When I had time to think back on those wins I thought more about the players that I have been able to coach over the years rather than the wins themselves," he said. "I think back about the fun and the relationships with these players and just how long I have been coaching. And while as a coach, you will always have ups and downs, I look back on these seasons as a soccer coach and realize that it has been the best part of my job."

Union hosts Rabun on Thursday at 5 p.m. and visits Towns at 5 p.m. on Friday.

The Lady Panthers will look to avenge their only regular season loss of 2015 when they take on Brook Barrett and the Lady Indians.

Rabun is currently 0-1-1.

Union sweeps at Oglethorpe; will host Rabun on Tuesday

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

The Panthers (8-4, 5-1) picked up another Region 8-AA sweep over the weekend when they took two games at Oglethorpe County by scores of 9-4 and 6-2.

The sweep gives Union the tiebreaker over both Riverside and Oglethorpe while leaving the Panthers and Social Circle as the only remaining teams in 8-AA with just one region loss.

Third place Rabun will visit Blairsville on Tuesday in a battle of last year's Co-Region Champions at 5 p.m.

In the first game at Oglethorpe on Saturday, the Patriots put up three runs in the bottom of the first for a 3-1 advantage. They added one more in the third - making it a 4-1 game.

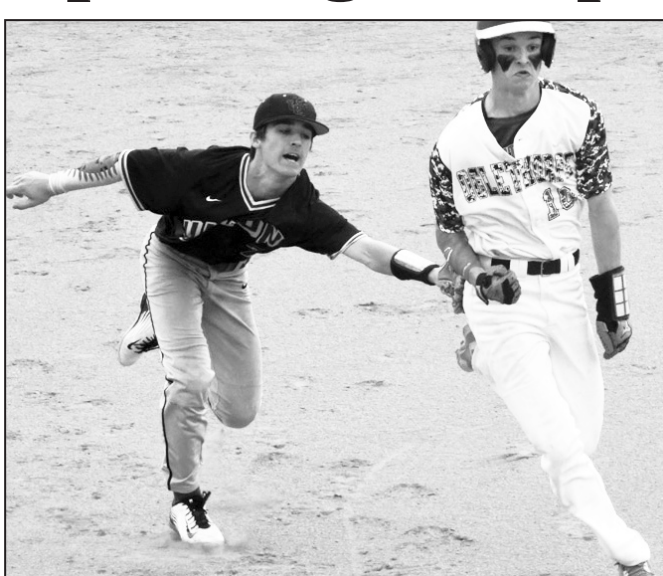
The Panthers got two back in the fifth before dropping six runs on the home team in the top half of the seventh for a 9-4 win.

In the second game, Union scored five in the fourth to take a 5-1 advantage. The Patriots got a run back in their half of the fourth but the Panthers tacked on an insurance run in the sixth to seal the 6-2 victory.

Senior Joseph Mancuso got the win in the second game after tossing 6 innings.

Josh Nachtrieb worked a scoreless seventh inning for Union.

The Panthers' 5-run fourth began with a one-out double by Andrew Brown to score senior



Sophomore Patrick Baggett applies the tag on a Patriot baserunner.

well singled to score Groves before scoring the third run of the inning on an error. A two-out single by Mancuso scored Cole Davis and Patrick Baggett to cap off the inning.

In the sixth, a base hit by Brown scored Mancuso for Union's sixth and final run.

The Patriots scored an unearned run in the second and drove in one with a base hit in the fourth.

In the first game, senior Lance Rich picked up the win after working 6 innings before handing the ball to senior Will King, who nailed down the save.

Union scored in the first when RJ Banton, who went 4-for-4, drove in Baggett with an RBI single.

Oglethorpe got three in the bottom of the first despite only

hitting one ball out of the infield. Walks, errors, hit batters, and bunt singles put the Panthers in a 3-1 hole.

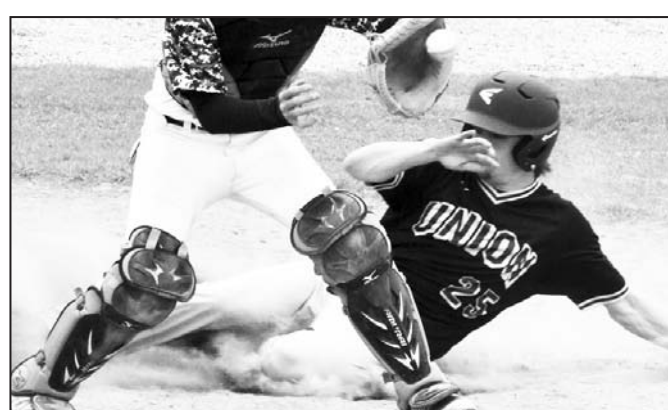
A leadoff double in the third led to a 4-1 score in the Patriots' favor.

A one-out RBI single by Banton in the fifth cut the deficit in half and Mancuso scored on a passed ball to bring Union within a run at 4-3.

A RBI single by Groves ignited the Panthers' scoring onslaught in the sixth. Crawford Colwell's sacrifice bunt scored a run to give Union the lead at 5-4.

A pair of bases loaded walks by Logan Dyer and Baggett made it a 7-4 game. Later in the inning, with two outs, Mancuso and Brown drew a bases loaded walk to stretch the lead to 9-4.

On Tuesday, the Panthers



Senior outfielder Andrew Brown slides safely into home.

fell 11-2 to Class AAAA's Pickens County.

The Dragons got four in the top of the first, six in the fourth, and one in the seventh while Union got a run in the fifth and the seventh.

The duo of sophomore Candler Colwell and freshman Coleson Daniel were the victims of 7 errors by the Panthers' defense. Of the 11 runs the two pitchers surrendered, only one was earned.

Game one vs OC stats:
HITTING - Baggett 0-for-4 with 1 run, 1 RBI, 1 BB, 1 SB. Rich 1-for-5. King 1 run. Mancuso 1-for-4, with 1 run, 1 RBI, 1 BB, 1 SB. Davis 0-for-4 with 2 RBIs, 1 2B. Davis 0-for-1 with 1 run. Brown 1-for-3 with 1 RBI, 1 run, 2 BB. Groves 1-for-2 with 1 RBI, 2 BB. Harkins 1 run. Crawford Colwell 1-for-1 with 1 run. Candler Colwell 2-for-3 with 1 run, 1 SB. Dyer 1-for-3 with 1 RBI, 1 run, 1 BB, 1 SB.

PITCHING - Rich 6 innings, 4 runs, 2 earned runs, 4 K, 9 hits, 3 BB. King 1 inning, 0 runs, 1 hit, 1 BB. WINNING

PITCHER - Rich

Game two vs OC stats:
HITTING - Baggett 1-for-5 with 1 run, Rich 1-for-3 with 1 BB. Mancuso 1-for-3 with 1 run, 2 RBIs, 1 BB, 1 SB. Banton 1-for-2 with 2 BB, 1 2B. Brown 1-for-4

with 1 run, 1 RBI, 1 BB. Groves 2-for-3 with 1 run, 1 RBI, 1 2B, 1 BB. Crawford Colwell 1-for-4 with 1 run, 1 RBI, 1 SB. Davis 1-for-2 with 1 run, 1 BB.

PITCHING - Mancuso 6 innings, 2 runs, 1 earned run, 6 K, 8 hits, 2 BB. Nachtrieb - 1 inning, 0 runs, 1 K. WINNING PITCHER - Mancuso.

Pickens Co. stats: Baggett 0-for-3 with 1 BB, 1 SB. Mancuso 1-for-3, Banton 1-for-3, Brown 1-for-3, Candler Colwell 0-for-2 with 1 run, 1 BB, 1 SB. Crawford Colwell 2-for-3, 1 run, 1 RBI. Davis 1-for-2 with 1 RBI.

PITCHING - Candler Colwell 4 innings, 4 runs, 1 earned run, 7 hits. Daniel 3 innings, 7 runs, 0 earned runs, 2 K, 2 hits, 2 BB.

Upcoming games: Tuesday vs Rabun County 5 p.m. Friday vs Murphy, NC 4:30 p.m.

Region 8-AA Baseball Standings		
TEAM	REGION REC	OVERALL REC
1. UNION COUNTY	5-1	8-4
2. SOCIAL CIRCLE	3-1	7-4
T3. RABUN COUNTY	3-2	4-9
T3. WASH WILKES	4-3	4-11
5. RIVERSIDE MILITARY	3-4	6-5
6. OGLETHORPE CO	2-4	5-8
7. GREENE COUNTY	0-5	0-5

THIS WEEK'S REGION GAMES:
Tuesday: Oglethorpe Co. @ Washington Wilkes
Tuesday: Social Circle @ Greene Co.
Tuesday: Rabun Co. @ Union Co.