

# Sports

See the Sports Section at nghanews.com

## Lady Panthers stunned by Towns; respond by walloping Rabun 10-0

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nghanews.com

Entering last week's contest with Towns County, the Lady Panthers were steam-rolling the opposition.

Through six games, Union County was outscoring its opponents by a combined score of 43-0, and the 2-3 Lady Indians from Class A were going to be the next victim of the Union County juggernaut as they geared up for Friday's Region 8-AA meeting with Rabun County.

However, in the early stages of Monday's Towns County contest, the visiting Lady Indians struck for a quick 1-0 advantage. The first goal that Union has allowed this season.

Towns (3-4) went on to take its 1-0 lead into the intermission and during the second half, Union County (7-1, 4-0) continued to outplay Lady Indians in every category except the one that matters.

"We didn't play well but we beat them everywhere except the scoreboard," Union County Head Soccer Coach Tim Hunter said.

When the Panther buzz sounded and the Lady Panthers suffered their first loss of the season, one person who was not shocked was Coach Hunter. Going into the contest, Hunter was aware that the Lady Indians had the talent to go toe-to-toe with an unbeaten Union County squad.

"Brooke Barrett (from Towns County) is probably the best player in North Georgia," Coach Hunter said. "She is a Division I recruit and is already being recruited (by SEC schools) and she's only a freshman. She's the real deal."

Another advantage that the Lady Indians had going for them is their brutal six-team region sched-



Union County freshman Brenna Innis (4) and junior Rachel Vester (5) are pursued by a relentless Lady Indians defense. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

ule that consists of Towns County and five private schools.

"The region (8-A) that they're in, top-to-bottom, is tougher than our region (8-AA)," Coach Hunter said. "They have Providence, who traditionally, is a very strong private school. They have Hebron, who won State a few years ago."

After suffering their first loss of the year, at the hands of their arch rival, the Lady Panthers were anxious to get back on the field and take out their frustrations on someone, and who better than Region 8-AA rival Rabun County. And during warm ups prior to the Rabun game on Friday, Coach Hunter could tell that his team meant business.

"We won that game 30 minutes before it even began," he said. "Our (team) leaders decided to take over and I didn't have to tell the players a single thing during warm ups. The girls just stepped up and had it handled. Before the

game their (Rabun) girls were wrapped up in blankets to deal with the cold while our girls were up bouncing around the whole time, and we just took out (all of our frustrations) on them."

Union went on top 5-0 in the first half with Maddy Morlock scoring the first two goals. Camryn Carter scored goals three and five, while Rachel Vester had her team's fourth goal.

Vester opened the second half with the Lady Panthers' sixth goal. Joanna Irvin followed up Vester with the seventh goal, Ansley Garrison scored goal number eight, Vester recorded the hat trick on Union's ninth goal, and Irvin ended the game with 2:27 left when she scored the 10th goal.

Braedyn Robbins led the team with three assists, Vester, and Carter added two each, while Morlock had one.

Union will host Lumpkin on Thursday at 5:30 p.m. then they'll take off until Apr. 14th

## Panthers remain unbeaten after 3-0 win over Rabun and 2-2 draw vs Towns

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nghanews.com

In the waning moments of the Towns - Union game last Monday, the Indians, up 2-1, were less than 30 seconds away from earning their second ever win over the Panthers after recording their first win last season.

That's when senior Kyle Hamby found the net when he powered his shot past the keeper with 27 seconds remaining - knotting the score at 2-2. Hamby was also responsible for the game's first goal when he gave the Panthers an early lead with a free kick goal in the first half.

Towns County would tie things up going into halftime before taking a 2-1 in the second half.

The Indians entered the game with an 0-5 record, but like the Lady Indians, their record can be misleading due to a brutal Region 8-A which features five private schools and Towns County.

On Friday night, the Panthers hosted Rabun County with State playoff implications riding high, and came through with a 3-0 victory.

"The boys are starting to become a product of our own success," Union County Head Coach Tim Hunter said. "We know we need to turn it up for Region games. It's not that the other games aren't important but we don't seem to get up for non-region games in the same way we do for Region games."

The Panthers got on the board with a Jesus Mancillas



Senior Kyle Hamby came to play last week with the game tying goal in the final seconds vs Towns, and one goal vs Rabun. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

penalty kick in the 19th minute of the game. Seven minutes later, Hamby made it 2-0, and with 30 seconds before the break, freshman Omar Godinez made it a 3-0 game.

"After we went up 3-0, we knew that the wind was going to be an issue (for Rabun) so we just had to ride it out," Coach Hunter said.

On Tuesday, the Panthers host Gilmer County at 5 p.m. On Friday, Lumpkin County comes to Blairsville for a 5:30 and 7:30 start.

Union County soccer will then take 12 days off before traveling to Towns County for a pair of rematches.

After clinching a berth in the State Tournament for the third straight season, the Panthers can turn its attention to a Region title.

Both Union squads have an important matchup with Oglethorpe County later this month, while the guys must go on the road to Riversville for the final region contest.

## Panthers muster just two hits in 5-1 loss at Rabun County

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nghanews.com

Tiger - Rabun County senior ace Stetson Scott stymied the Panthers' lineup, allowing just two hits, but Union still had plenty of opportunities to inflict damage, but were unable to come up with a clutch hit.

Even while trailing 5-1 entering the seventh inning, the Panthers were able to load the bases with two outs, bringing the tying run to the plate, but Scott's fifth strikeout of the day ended the rally and the game.

"We had base runners, but we just couldn't get the two out hits we needed to have a chance," Union County Head Coach Brandon Bradburn said.

While Rabun's ace was busy keeping Union off-balance, the Panthers were without the services of ace Joseph Mancuso and senior right-hander Tyler Odom.

After throwing 122 pitches just four days earlier, Mancuso was only available for an inning out of the bullpen.

Meanwhile, Odom was dealing with an elbow injury, forcing Coach Bradburn into some last-minute adjustments.

The duo of Mancuso and Odom own five of Union's six wins and have fanned 50 of the pitching



Tyler Odom was unable to pitch but provided Union with its one RBI in the Rabun game. Photo/Todd Forrest

staff's 80 strikeout victims.

Getting the nod from Coach Bradburn was junior Josh Daniel, who battled for five innings, keeping his team in the game, surrendering five runs - four earned.

"Joe (Mancuso) had a really high pitch count on Friday and I was going to use him in a closer role, if we had the lead," Coach Bradburn said. "Tyler Odom is suffering from an elbow injury and was a late scratch from the

mound.

"Josh did a good job, gave us a chance in the game but we just couldn't string enough hits together to have a chance at winning."

At the plate, Daniel would lead off the game for the Panthers by reaching on an error - the first of four Wildcat miscues.

He would reach second with one out but was left stranded. Rabun opened their half of the first with a base hit to center, followed



Josh Daniel gave the Panthers five solid innings at Rabun but suffered from very little run support. Photo/Todd Forrest

by a pair of infield singles to load the bases with nobody out.

Daniel would stifle the Wildcats and limit the home team to one run that came on a groundout to second.

Odom reached on an error with two outs in the second but wouldn't advance.

Union went down 1-2-3 in the third after senior catcher Chase Barnett cut down a Rabun base runner trying to swipe second in the bottom of the second.

The Wildcats put two in

scoring position with no outs in the third before Daniel induced a pair of ground outs. Unfortunately, Rabun came up with a clutch single to extend their advantage to 2-0.

Mancuso reached on an error to leadoff the fourth and with one out, senior Jackson Burks reached on a fielders choice. Junior Lance Rich drew a two-out walk and Odom doubled to left - bringing in Burks.

After the Panthers got within a run at 2-1, the Wildcats tacked on three runs in their half

of the fourth.

A leadoff single and an error led to the first run of the inning, a walk and a pair of RBI singles followed and the home team took control at 5-1.

Hunter Hughes reached to leadoff the fifth but was left stranded. And in the sixth inning, the Panthers went down 1-2-3.

Union freshman Candler Colwell relieved Daniel and took the mound in the bottom of the sixth. In his varsity debut, he allowed a leadoff single but quickly benefited from a pitcher's best friend, the 6-4-3 double play. After a groundout to end the sixth inning, the Panthers loaded the bases in the seventh. Sophomore Dawson Groves reaches on an error, Daniel drew a walk, and Hughes was hit-by-a-pitch, but once again, Union was denied a hit with runners in scoring position.

The Panthers will host Riversville on Tuesday at 5 p.m. The 0-9 Eagles lost a 1-0 pitchers duel to Mancuso and the Panthers in the first meeting. Friday, Union visits Greene County - who is also winless - for a 5 p.m. doubleheader.

"As we close in on the finish of the regular season, we just need to continue working on hitting, making productive outs at the plate and good ole fashioned execution in big moments," Coach Bradburn said.

## JV baseball off to a 5-2 start after splitting doubleheader with Lumpkin

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nghanews.com

Last week the Panthers JV baseball team crushed Fannin County 12-2 then split a doubleheader with Lumpkin County the following day.

Candler Colwell pitched the first Lumpkin game for the Panthers with little run support as the Indians took the contest by a 5-1 score.

In the second game, Joshua Nachtrieb picked up the win after the Panthers exploded in the third and fourth innings, going on to win 15-4.

"These guys are good," said Union County Coach Brandon Bradburn when asked about the JV's pitching. "There are honestly six or seven pitchers on the team that could go the distance on any given day. Candler Colwell and Josh Nachtrieb are leading the way on the mound.

"The most important aspect of our JV is our pitching depth. Without question."

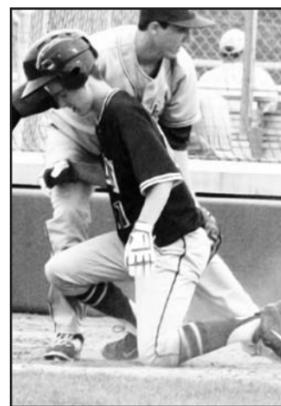
Taking over the reins as the JV Head Coach is 2007 Union County graduate Corey



Freshman Candler Colwell delivers vs Lumpkin as brother Crawford Colwell, also a freshman, looks on from first. Photo/Todd Forrest



Catcher Will King lines up the cut off man following a Lumpkin County hit during the first game of the twin bill. Photo/Todd Forrest



Patrick Baggett



RJ Banton