

Sports

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Lady Panthers claim 8-AA title with shutout of Oglethorpe

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Union County's 3-0 victory over Oglethorpe County was bittersweet.

On the bright side, the Lady Panthers (8-1, 5-0) have claimed their first Region Championship since 2004 without surrendering a goal in region play. For the year, Union outscored the rest of Region 8-AA by a combined total of 34-0. Overall, they outscored the opposition 56-1 during nine regular season games.

"I knew the girls would be in the hunt and I really expected us to win the Region," Union County Head Soccer Coach Tim Hunter said. "The biggest surprise of the season is that we (Lady Panthers) only gave up one goal all season. Joanna Van Pelt gave up zero goals as a goalie in the region this year. We not only beat the entire region but we were never scored on in the region."

The Region 8-AA Championship awards the Lady Panthers home field advantage during the first round of State, where they will host Darlington. And if Union survives round one, they will be awarded the second round at home.

Unfortunately, Union County will be without the services of leading scorer Maddy Morlock who suffered a leg injury in the early stages of the Oglethorpe game and will miss the remainder of the season.

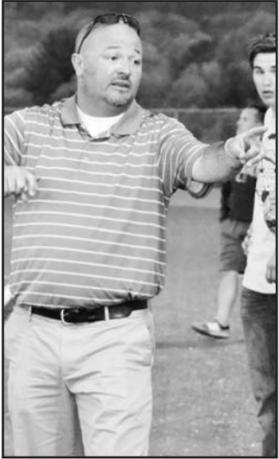
"We'll be playing short-handed," Coach Hunter said. "Anytime you lose your leading scorer from the last two years, they will be missed. You just don't replace someone like her."

Junior Rachel Vester also suffered an injury during the first half of the Oglethorpe game that put her on the bench for the remainder of the contest. However, Coach Hunter is confident that she will be ready to go on Thursday.

As for the Lady Pan-



Rachel Vester and Cameron Carter vs Oglethorpe. Photos/Todd Forrest



Head Coach Tim Hunter



Maddy Morlock

thers' first round opponent, the Darlington Lady Tigers enter the contest as the No. 4 seed from Region 7-AA, while sporting a 6-8 record. They will enter Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on the heels of a 9-0 rout over a winless Chattooga County team. Prior to that win, Darlington had lost four-of-five games, including a 10-0 loss to River Ridge.

"Darlington is a good team," Coach Hunter said. "You don't run into too many chumps at the state level."

Coach Hunter is well aware that Darlington is a talented private school, and coupled with the loss of Morlock, Union will have its hands full but he's confident his squad will get the W.

"Losing Maddy really changes our game plan," Coach Hunter said. "However I think that our defense at midfield can be extremely effective. We're going to find a way to get some goals and get past Darlington."

In the 3-0 win over Oglethorpe, senior Camryn Carter finished with a hat trick in the first half. The Union County senior used a combination of touch and power as each of her three goals came from more than 20 yards out.

Her first one came just 80 seconds into the contest when she placed a perfect kick just over the keeper's fingertips from about 30 yards out.

Her second goal came in the game's 17th minute when



Adele Bauman



Camryn Carter



Katie Miller



Emma Smith



Marissa Spaulding



Joanna Van Pelt

she connected from around 20 yards away. The third and final goal came in the 22nd minute from the right flank, approximately 25 yards away.

The Lady Patriots had a chance to get on the board in the 24th minute but the stingy Union County defense kept Oglethorpe off the board, just as they did to the rest of Region 8-AA in 2015.

The Lady Panthers will begin the postseason on Thursday, Apr. 30th at 6:30 p.m. when they host Darlington.

They need all the support that the community can give them this week as they look to reach the Sweet 16 for the second time in three years.



Sophomore Braedyn Robbins during the first half of Union's championship-clinching win over Oglethorpe. Photo/Todd Forrest

Panthers fall at RMA; respond with shutout of Oglethorpe to place second

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On Tuesday, the Union County men squared off with third ranked Riverside Military Academy in a contest that would determine the Region 8-AA champs.

The Eagles' defense went on to hand the Panthers their first loss and first shutout of the season in a 2-0 game.

However, the Panthers (8-1-1, 5-1) had no time to hang their heads as Oglethorpe County came to town 24 hours later with bad intentions. The Patriots were looking to knock Union out of second place but the Panthers would have none of it.

Just like the Lady Panthers, Union struck early with two first half goals.

The first came in the 12th minute when sophomore Sam Seiler put the home team on the board.

Six minutes later, sophomore Parker McCombs stacked on another goal when the Patriots keeper couldn't secure the ball and McCombs pounced on the rebound.

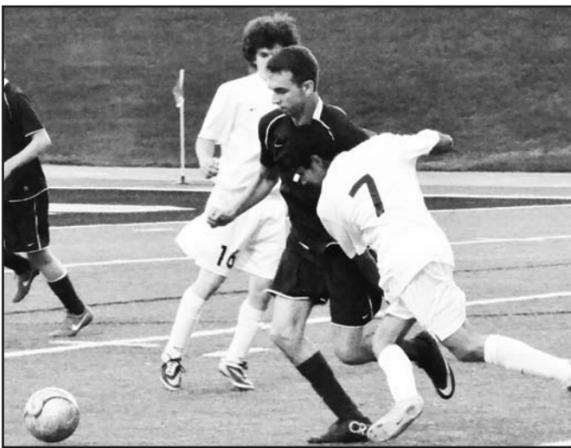
Two goals would be more than enough for the Panthers defense, who, led by junior keeper Justin Eigel, were playing lights out on the defensive end.

In the second half, freshman Omar Godinez put the game away with Union's third goal of the evening.

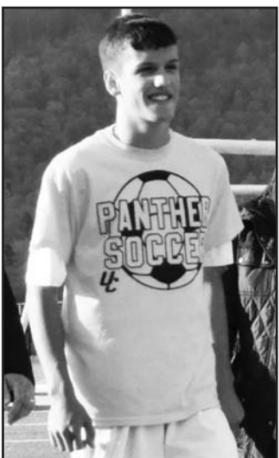
Now the Panthers turn their attention to the Class AA State Tournament where they will host Armuchee in the opening round.

The Indians will roll into Blairsville on Friday with a 5-9 overall record and a 5-5 mark within Region 7-AA.

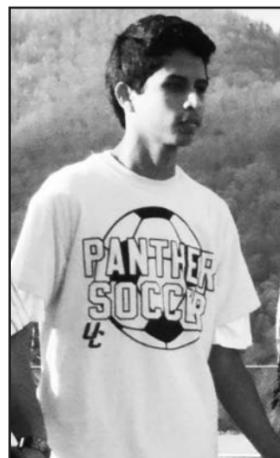
"Armuchee isn't unbeatable like you would face out of Region 6-AA," Coach Hunter said. "I feel if we play well, we win but if we don't play well, they are definitely good enough



Freshman Omar Godinez and sophomore Parker McCombs vs Oglethorpe. Both would score later in the game. Photo/Todd Forrest



Phillippe Jennings



Alex Mancillas

to beat us." Over the last eight games the Indians are 4-4 with a pair of one-sided wins over two winless teams in Dade County and Chattooga County.

Then they were defeated 6-0 by an 11-4 Darlington squad before responding with another win over Chattooga, but this time it was on the road and the score was a little closer at 6-3.

Armuchee would lose a 2-1 nail biter and a 3-0 shutout to an 8-2 Coosa team before defeating a 6-7 Model squad by a score of 6-0.

In the regular season finale, the Indians fell 3-1 to a 4-7 Rockmart squad.

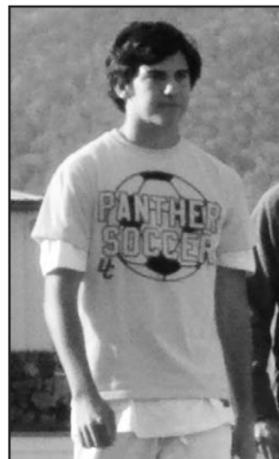
If Armuchee can find a way to upset the Panthers, it would be their first victory

over a team with a winning record this season. In fact, four of their five victories came over teams that didn't win a game all season.

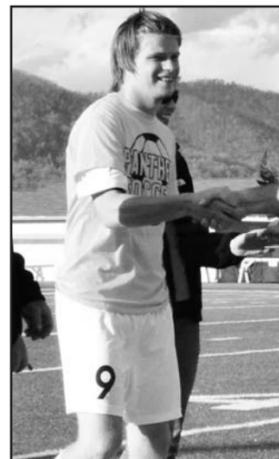
Their 3-1 win over Model on April 16th is the only win over a team that has at least one win on the season.

On the other hand, they may have lost nine games but they came against solid competition. Gordon Central, Bremen, Darlington, and Coosa combined for six of their nine losses.

The first round is set for Friday, May 1st at 7:30 p.m. where, like the Lady Panthers, the Panthers will be looking for their second trip to the Class AA's Sweet 16 in three years.



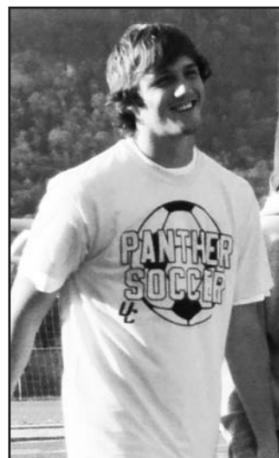
Brett Dietz



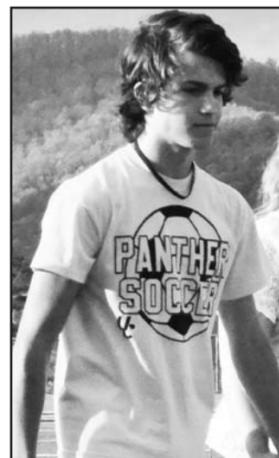
Keaton Dyer



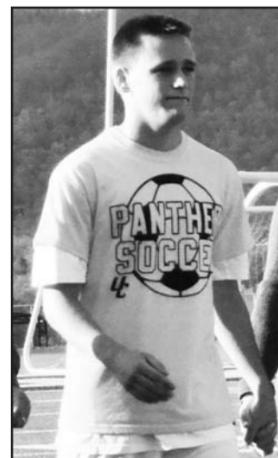
Kyle Hamby



Jacob Rogers



John Spaulding



Aaron Stafford



Sam Seiler



Senior Phillippe Jennings moves the ball upfield vs Oglethorpe County. Photo/Todd Forrest