

Sports

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Panthers' offense clicks in scrimmage at Class AAA Sonoraville

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Sonoraville - Pads were popping under the lights last Friday in northwest Georgia as the Panthers traveled to Gordon County for a preseason scrimmage.

The Union County offense punched the ball into the endzone on three of its first four possessions for a 21-14 advantage at the half.

Both squads were coming off a State playoff appearance last November where Union fell to Lovett, the Class AA State champ, and the Phoenix were routed by Buford, the Class AAA State champs.

The first half of the contest saw both varsity units take the field before giving way to the junior varsity in the second half.

During the third and fourth quarters, the Panthers' JV squad clamped down on the Sonoraville offense and outscored the home team 14-0.

The Union County offense took the opening possession of the game and drove 70 yards for a score when two First Team All-Region selections hooked up for six points.

Junior quarterback Joseph Mancuso hit senior wideout Jacob Rogers for a 13-yard touchdown grab right out of the gates. The point after attempt was unsuccessful and the visitors held a 6-0 lead in the early stages of the contest.

On the ensuing Phoenix possession, Union County senior corner-back Luke Chatham picked off a Sonoraville pass deep in Panther territory. Unfortunately, Union would fumble near midfield, setting up a Phoenix touchdown.

A 6-yard touchdown pass with 9:17 to play in the second gave the home team a 7-6 advantage.

The Panthers took over at their own 30-yard line and Mancuso quickly moved the offense downfield. A 26-yard strike to Rogers was followed by a 16-yard hook up with Clay Wallis. Following a sack, Union faced a 4th-and-15 at the Phoenix 34-yard line but Mancuso found Rogers down the far sideline for the duo's second TD of the half.

Union converted a 2-point conversion when Mancuso con-



Sophomore running back Bo Lynch (5) protects Joseph Mancuso (9) as the junior quarterback scans the field for an open receiver at Sonoraville. Photo/Todd Forrest

ected with Robert Prunier for a 14-7 lead at the 6:42 mark of the half.

"Skill position-wise, I was pleased," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said. "We scored on three of four possessions and converted a two-point conversion."

Down seven, the Sonoraville ground game moved them into the Panther redzone in seven plays. On the eighth play a quarterback scramble found pay dirt from 16 yards out, knotting the game at 14-14 with 3:28 before the half.

"Defensively, I wasn't very pleased," Coach Allison said. "We blew some assignments early on and missed some tackles. We didn't allow any big plays and made them drive the ball, but we couldn't get off the field on defense."

The Panther offense went back to work and on the second play, Mancuso hit Brett Dietz over the middle for 44 yards before Bo Lynch capped off the drive with 25-yard carry and a 3-yard scoring run. Knox Kieman's PAT split the uprights with 1:50 left in the half.

"Offensively, I thought we moved the ball very well," Coach Allison said. "We rushed the ball well and I liked the way we were blocking up front."



Chase Barnett (44), Tulsa Queen (52), and Brett Dietz (28) swarm a Sonoraville ball carrier. Photo/Todd Forrest

Sonoraville's varsity's attempt to tie things up was dismantled by a Tulsa Queen sack to end the half and Union took a 21-14 lead into the locker room.

A Panther fumble and a Phoenix punt opened the JV's second half action but Union would get back on track.

Freshman quarterback Cole Wright broke loose for 43 yards to the Sonoraville 4-yard line. On first and goal, Wright hit freshman Cole Dockery for a score with 39 seconds left in the third.

Late in the game, freshman Austin Pattee reeled in a pass from Wright at the 1-yard line. Then on 4th-and-goal, Wright kept it himself for Union's second and final score of the half. Freshman James Fagin connected on the PAT, resulting in a 14-0 advantage for the Panthers' JV.

"I thought we ran the ball very well in the second half," Allison said. "Prunier played some at quarterback for the first time and we moved the ball. Cole Wright came in at quarterback and did a nice job



Clay Wallis



Jacob Rogers



Junior Josh Daniel (20) brings down a Phoenix ball carrier as Zach Stone (7) and Andrew Brown (25) give chase. Photo/Todd Forrest



Tyler McCoy (14) and Reid Watson (71) swallow up the Sonoraville quarterback during the second quarter on Friday. Photo/Todd Forrest

and the line blocked well. I was pleased with the effort in the second half.

Union will have two weeks off before visiting archival Towns County on Aug. 29th.

"We're going to continue improving our blocking and work on tackling. That's what wins football games at any level," Coach Allison said.

Lady Panthers enter Region 8-AA action with 5-0 mark

By Todd Forrest
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The Union County Lady Panthers (5-0) used a pair of late inning surges to blast Class AAA's Fannin County 13-1 on the road and Class AAA's White County 10-2 at home to remain unbeaten.

Sophomore Laken Chambers picked up the win in both contests to improve to 4-0 from the circle. She also belted a two-run homer in the first inning at Fannin.

Chambers' dinger sparked Union to a 3-1 lead after an inning and a 6-1 lead after two. That score would remain unchanged until the Lady Panthers put up 7 runs in the seventh inning for a 13-1 advantage.

With an evening rain shower resulting in less than favorable playing conditions, and the Lady Rebels struggling to record an out during that final frame, Union Head Coach Jessica Stewart stressed the importance of not having to play from behind against a rival.

"It's always a bit of a rivalry when we're up against Fannin so scoring early was great, especially since the rain came, and then it could have went either way," Coach Stewart said.

After Union sent eight hitters to the plate in a three-run first, sophomore Lydia Arrowood led off with an opposite field single, senior Crystal Busbee followed suit, and junior Karley Nix brought in Arrowood with a base hit. Chambers laced an RBI double to center, and senior Courtney Busbee brought in courtesy runner Braden Poteete with an infield single for a 6-1 score.

Chambers was hit by a pitch to lead off the seventh and Poteete replaced her on the base paths. Junior Maddie Garrett walked, Courtney Busbee drew another free pass, and sophomore Kendra Tanner brought in two runs on a Lady Rebel error. Senior Halle King added another run thanks to a fielding error, making it a 9-1 game. Senior Kelsey Nix walked, Ar-



Fannin's coach watches Laken Chambers' first homerun of 2014 take flight last Tuesday at Blue Ridge City Park. Photo/Todd Forrest

rowood reached on a catcher's interference, bringing in another run, and Crystal Busbee singled, scoring King.

Kelsey Nix and Arrowood would later score, rounding out Union's 7-run seventh inning.

Chambers allowed four hits and one run in seven innings of work. She struck out four and walked three. At the plate, the sophomore was 2-for-4 with 4 RBIs. Crystal Busbee and Karley Nix also had a multi-hit game for Union. Tanner drove in two runs and Poteete scored twice.

Against White County on Thursday, the Lady Panthers put up four runs in the fourth to break open a 1-1 tie and posted five more in the fifth to end the game 10-2, via the mercy rule.

Chambers allowed one earned run and six hits in five innings. She struck out four and walked one.

The Lady Warriors committed seven errors in the loss and an opportunistic Union lineup took advantage.

"We played great defense against White County and they committed seven errors, which was the difference in the game," Coach Stewart said. "We hit the ball hard and they made mistakes. White County is a good

hitting team but the girls got the job done."

Karley Nix, Garrett, Kelsey Nix, and Arrowood each had a two-hit game, while Courtney Busbee drove in two runs.

Earlier this month Karley Nix moved to the left-handed batters box as a slap hitter, and after five games, the junior infielder is batting .312 with 4 runs scored and 2 RBIs.

"Nix switching over to slap was a decision made about a week or two ago and she just wanted to try it out," Coach Stewart said. "I didn't take her seriously at first but she was determined to try it out and so far she has been really successful at it. She creates pressure on the defense and has placed the ball well."

On Tuesday, Union opens Region 8-AA play with a home field doubleheader with Oglethorpe County at 5 and 7 p.m. On Thursday, Rabun County comes calling at 6 p.m.

"The girls are ready to get the region started, it is what we have been preparing for all summer," Coach Stewart said. "We have a team goal to win the region this year and they're determined to get started with Oglethorpe and Rabun."



Karley Nix



Halle King



Maddie Garrett



Shortstop Crystal Busbee applies the tag at second. Photo/Todd Forrest

PANTHERS
UNION COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

OPEN HOUSE

AUGUST 28, 4:30-5 PM
COME AT 5 P.M. FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Topics to be discussed, that are important to you as parents, include:

- What is a Title I school?
- Review of the Schoolwide Program
- Common Core curriculum and assessments
- Review of the Parent Involvement Policy
- Review of the School-Parent Compact

Childcare will be provided. In addition, attendees will receive a "Homework Pass."

We hope to see you there!

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