

Sports

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Union's 522 yards of total offense not enough at Fannin

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Blue Ridge - In week one Union County (1-1) finished with only 196 yards of total offense but won by four touchdowns.

Last Friday at Fannin County (1-1) there was a stark contrast in yardage and on the scoreboard.

The Panthers rolled out 522 yards of total offense but fell 43-35 to the Rebels.

Union's sophomore quarterback Mancuso threw for two touchdowns and put up 352 yards through the air - the most since Kolt Owenby threw for 363 at Dawson County in 2009. Mancuso also ran for a team high 95 yards and two scores for a total of 447 yards of offense from the Panther signal caller.

The Fannin County offense, thanks to the senior trio of Trevor Stone, Peyton Satterfield, and Noah O'Neal was clicking all night and Union was unable to find an answer.

"They had four or five seniors who were playing their last game against Union and didn't want to go out with three straight losses to us," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said. "We fought hard to the very end but they just wanted it more than we did."

The Rebel defense then stepped it up a notch and forced three late turnovers in a 21-20 game, that turned it into a 43-27 Rebel advantage with 4:14 to play in the game.

Following a Rebel go-ahead field goal, the backbreaker came on a 85-yard pick-six by O'Neal that swung momentum back to the home team, giving them a 36-27 lead with less than eight minutes to play. Another Panther interception set the Rebels up with prime field position, and would allow Fannin to open up a 16-point lead in the final minutes.

The Panthers would add a late score and 2-point conversion but the onside kick was recovered by Fannin, sealing the win for the Rebels, tying the all-time series back up at 23-23.

The game opened with the Rebels striking on a 79-yard touchdown pass on their second play from scrimmage.

After a Union score cut it to 7-6, Fannin went back to the



Jacob Rogers stretches out for the touchdown. Photo/Todd Forrest



Brett Dietz lowers the boom on a Rebel back. Photo/Todd Forrest

deep ball, this time connecting on a 59-yard bomb down the sideline.

The Panthers tied it up for a 14-14 score at the break, but both offenses would turn things up a notch in the second half.

Union got the ball first in the third quarter and scored on a 63-yard pass from Mancuso to junior Robert Prunier.

The Rebels would answer with their third scoring pass of the evening, this time from 36 yards out, making it a 21-20 game.

An interception by the Rebel defense set up an 8-yard scoring run. The 2-point try was unsuccessful and Union trailed 26-21 with 6:38 to play in the third.

After the teams exchanged punts, Union marched down the field and snatched the lead away with a 20-yard pass by Mancuso to junior Jacob Rogers. The Panthers 2-point pass attempt went incomplete, giving Union a 27-26 lead after three quarters.

The Rebels hit a 31-yard

field goal early in the fourth for a 29-27 lead with 9:18 to play.

The Panthers had two receivers go over the 100-yard mark with Prunier pulling in 121 yards on 6 grabs. Rogers reeled in 128 yards on 9 grabs, including 45-yarder on Union's first series of the game, setting up a 3-yard quarterback keeper by Mancuso for the Panthers' first score. The PAT was no good after a Rebel offside penalty and a Union County false start erased the first point after try which split the uprights.

Down 7-6, Fannin caught Union off guard again by going back to the vertical passing game, connecting on a 59-yard score down the Panthers' sideline.

"(Fannin) just started running the spread (offense) this year but they still seemed like they wanted to run it more than throw it," Coach Allison said regarding what he had seen from scouting Fannin. "Then we get into the game and they started throwing it on us, which was something we hadn't seen them do. They threw



Sophomore Joseph Mancuso takes the snap. Photo/Todd Forrest



Robert Prunier

it vertical one time early against Gilmer."

A fumble by the Panthers gave it back to Fannin but a third down sack by senior Luther Jones forced the Rebels into a punting situation.

A pair of runs by Mancuso for 9 yards and 5 yards, then an 11-yard hook up to Prunier for 11 yards had Union on the move, but a sack put Union in a fourth-and-long, bringing up a punt.

The Panthers caught a break when Fannin was penalized on Prunier's punt, giving Union a first down, much to the dismay of the Rebel faithful and coaching staff.

With new life awarded to the Panther offense, junior quarterback Ralston Drake entered the game and hit Prunier for 8 yards on 3rd-and-7 setting up Union with a first down at the Rebels' 22-yard line. However the offense stalled and facing a 4th-and-18, following a false start flag, then Drake's pass to Prunier was stopped three yards short of the marker, turning the



Sam Gilbert

ball over on downs.

The Panther defense forced a three-and-out and after the punt, Union took over at their own 45-yard line.

After a short gain by sophomore running back Nick Whittle, Mancuso found Rogers for an 11-yard gain and a first down. Junior Chase Barnett entered at running back and carried around the end for 12 yards as the Panthers continued to dish out a steady dose of Mancuso and Barnett on the ground. Mancuso went back to the air, finding sophomore Sam Gilbert for 6 yards, then an illegal participation penalty put Union inside the Rebel 10-yard line. Two plays later, Whittle plowed his way into the endzone from 2 yards out. On the 2-point try, Mancuso kept it himself and went straight up the middle for the conversion, knotting the game at 14-14.

Union forced another three-and-out, giving the Panthers one more shot with 3:42 remaining in the half.

A 22-yard strike from

Mancuso to junior Brett Dietz had Union on the move. A 14-yard keeper by Mancuso put the Panthers 22 yards away from pay dirt but the drive would stall.

A pair of runs by Whittle and Mancuso put Union in a 3rd-and-5 until an incomplete brought up a fourth down. The Panthers elected to go for it instead of attempting a 34-yard field goal but the screen pass to Sam Gilbert was stopped just short of the first, sending both squads into the break deadlocked at 14-14.

On the opening drive of the second half, Mancuso found a streaking Prunier down the Rebel sidelines for a 63-yard score on 3rd-and-6. Sophomore Jake Walts' PAT try was good and Union had its first lead of the game at 21-14 with 10:19 left in the third.

The Rebels went back to work with Stone taking a quarterback keeper for 15 yards on third down, putting Fannin near midfield. A pass interference call on Union gave the Rebels 15 more yards, setting up a 36-yard touchdown pass. The PAT was no good and Union held a 21-20 lead at the 8:52 mark of the third.

A holding flag on second down and a false start on third down derailed the ensuing Union County drive, and on 3rd-and-6, Mancuso was picked off at the Panther 42-yard line.

A facemask call against the Panthers moved Fannin into the redzone, where Stone punched it in from 8 yards out, staking the Rebels to a 26-21 lead with 6:38 left in the third.

After picking up a first down on a 13-yard pass to sophomore Andrew Brown, the Panthers were forced to punt.

The Rebels moved the chains once before Dietz broke up a third down pass.

Fannin was flagged for a personal foul during Union's punt return, setting up the Panthers in Rebel territory with 1:43 to go in the third.

Mancuso hit Sam Gilbert for 13 yards, Whittle carried for 4 yards, and Rogers hauled in a pass for 8-yards.

On 3rd-and-10, Mancuso connected with Rogers again, the Panther receiver made a defender miss, and he raced down the sideline for a 20-yard score.

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Lady Panthers romp Rabun County; struggle at Veterans' Tournament

Union 6-0 in 8-AA, playoff picture comes into focus with games at Social Circle and Jefferson this week

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Union County (10-7, 6-0) continues to inch closer to another State Playoff berth as they put away Rabun County 9-1 in six innings.

Over the weekend, Union traveled to Oconee County for the Veterans Tournament. The Lady Panthers knocked off fellow Class AA foe Greater Atlanta Christian but fell to Jones County from Class AAAAA on Friday.

On Saturday, Union's struggles began when they fell to Savannah Christian, Heritage-Catoosa from Class AAAAA, and Class AAA's East Hall.

With three critical 8-AA games this week the Lady Panthers must put the weekend losses behind them, and do it quickly. On Tuesday, Union has a double header at Social Circle then visit Jefferson on Thursday, along with a non-Region game at White County on Wednesday.

"We did play some very good teams this weekend however we did not play well at all," Union County Head Coach Jessica Stewart said. "We will have to learn from it and find something positive from the weekend and bounce back."

Union County 9 Rabun County 1

The Lady Wildcats put up one run in the second inning but Union answered with five in the bottom of the second, two in the third, and three in the sixth, ending the game early.

Freshman Laken Chambers improved to 5-0 on the year, striking out six, allowing one hit and no earned runs in five innings of work.

Senior Allie Stroman went 2-for-3 with 3 RBIs with a run and a triple. Sophomore Johnah Langston knocked in two runs with a single in the sixth before junior Crystal Busbee ended the game with



Sophomore Johnah Langston drives in two with a single against Rabun County. Photo/Todd Forrest

an RBI single. Senior Madison Rich went 1-for-3 with an RBI, junior Kelsey Nix was 1-for-2 with an RBI, a walk, and a run. Sophomore Maddie Garrett drove in a run, junior Hallye King finished 2-for-3 with 3 runs scored, junior Courtney Busbee was 2-for-2 with a walk. Freshman Kendra Tanner scored three times as a courtesy runner for catcher Courtney Busbee.

Jones County 6 Union County 1

Jones County jumped out to a 6-0 lead after six innings before Union got on the board thanks to an RBI single from Courtney Busbee.

Crystal Busbee (4-4) worked a complete game allowing 12 hits and striking out one. The junior pitcher went 2-for-4 at the plate, scoring Union's only run of the contest.

Rich and King also added base hits for the Lady Panthers who suffered from 11 strikeouts during the contest.

Union County 15 G.A.C. 8

After struggling at the plate against Jones County, the Lady Panther bats came to life against G.A.C. by pounding out 15 runs against the Lady

Spartans. The Union County lineup went without a strikeout for the entire contest.

G.A.C. posted three runs in the first but Union fired back with 18 hits and held a 12-3 lead in the middle of the fifth inning.

G.A.C. put up four in their half of the fifth but Union got three more in the sixth to put the Lady Spartans away.

Chambers (6-0) got the win from the circle, despite 7 Lady Panther errors, resulting in no earned runs. The freshman struck out 7, allowed 8 hits, including a homerun.

Garrett went 2-for-4 with 3 RBIs, Kelsey Nix was 3-for-4 with 2 RBIs and a double, Langston was 2-for-4 with 2 RBIs, King went 3-for-5 with 2 RBIs, Crystal and Courtney Busbee each went 2-for-5 with 2 RBIs, and Chambers was 1-for-4 with an RBI.

Stroman doubled twice on her way to a 2-for-5 game, Rich was 1-for-3 with a walk. Freshman Lydia Arrowood scored twice, and Tanner crossed the plate once.

SCA 10 Union County 2

Savannah Christian Academy took an early 7-0 lead then put Union away with three in the sixth.



Last Thursday was Union's "Pink Out" game in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Here the Lady Panthers pose with Alex Jordan - Union County's No. 1 fan (center). Photo/Todd Forrest

Chambers (6-1) suffered her first loss of the year, surrendering 13 hits, 10 earned runs, and 3 walks.

The Lady Panther lineups could only muster 5 hits. Crystal Busbee led the way with a 2 RBI triple, Courtney Busbee was 2-for-3 and Kelsey Nix went 2-for-3.

Heritage-Catoosa 12 Union County 0

Heritage put Union away in four innings thanks to a six-run third inning, five Lady Panther errors and only two hits from the offense.

Crystal Busbee (4-5) took the loss, allowing 8 earned runs on 10 hits.

Courtney Busbee and Kelsey Nix singled and Rich drew a walk.

East Hall 6 Union County 0

Chambers (6-2) lost her second consecutive game allowing 11 hits, 5 earned runs, despite striking out five and not walking a batter.

King went 3-for-3 at the plate, while Courtney Busbee was 1-for-3, Chambers went 1-for-3, Langston was 1-for-3, and Arrowood was 1-for-4.

The Lady Panthers were



Union's seniors and coaches. L-R: Coach Brooklyn Harris, Madison Rich, Coach Jessica Stewart, Allie Stroman, and Coach Jennifer Cagle

shutout in consecutive games for the first time in four years but must put that behind them as Region play enters the home stretch.

The Lady Panthers can inch one step closer to another State Playoff berth with wins over Social Circle and Jefferson. Although with a double header next week with Washington-Wilkes and a makeup game at Rabun remaining, Coach Stewart knows that nothing will be set in stone in Region 8-AA until the dust finally settles in late September.

"We are not thinking about the postseason yet," she

said. "We are still just taking it one game at a time. We will focus on Social Circle first, then White County on Wednesday and Jefferson on Thursday. After we are finished with our Region games, then we will focus on what happens next."

The Lady Panthers' next, and possibly last home game will be a double header with Washington-Wilkes on Sept. 19th beginning at 4 p.m. Union still has a makeup game with Rabun and non-Region contests at East Hall on Sept. 16th and another makeup game at North Murray later this month.