

UCMS Panthers pull away from rival Indians

By Todd Forrest
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HIWASSEE - Union County Middle School outscored Towns County 14-0 in the second half for a 35-14 victory.

The Panthers handed the Indians their first loss of the season thanks to quarterback Bo Lynch putting up some huge numbers, scoring five rushing touchdowns.

Union struck first to take a 7-0 lead, until Towns answered right back with an 84-yard kickoff return by Kobe Denton for a score. Russell Cox added a two-point conversion to give Towns an 8-7 lead.

Lynch would score two more times to give Union a 21-8 lead late in the first half, but Towns scored on a 35-yard touchdown strike to keep it a one-possession game at 21-14 going into the break.

"It seemed like we didn't play that well in the first half but really, we only gave up two big plays," Union Coach Casey Jones said. "We played okay. We had an opportunity to put



Panthers gang up on a Towns County ball carrier last Thursday in Hiwassee. Union ended Towns' bid at a perfect season with a 35-14 win. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

them away early but didn't.

Union County's defense made a statement early in the third quarter when Cole Wright picked off a Cox pass on the second play of the half.

The Panthers were unable to produce any points off the turnover and turned it over on downs.

The defense would force the Indians into a three-and-out on the ensuing possession and took advantage of an excellent

Nic Rodriguez punt return to open the Panther drive inside the Red Zone.

Lynch would take care of the rest and score his fourth touchdown to give Union a 28-14 lead.

On the kickoff, Coach Jones called for a pooch-kick that was recovered by Zac Stone and set the Panthers up for the knockout blow. Union connected when Lynch capped off the drive with an-

other touchdown to make it a 35-14 game.

"I told our guys that Towns always brings their best against us," Coach Jones said. "I was a little bit concerned about us going over there and not being ready mentally."

Next week Union County returns home to face Copper Basin, TN before traveling to Lumpkin County in a game that will decide the No. 2 seed in the league.

"We still have a few things that we obviously need to get better at, but we're playing pretty well and I'm pleased with our effort," Coach Jones said. "We're 3-1 and looking to get ready for Copper Basin this week."

"The match up with Lumpkin is a big one to end the regular season. That will pretty much determine where we play in the first round of the playoffs," he said.

Right now Union and Lumpkin are tied for second behind an unbeaten Rabun County squad.

A win for Union will secure the second seed and will likely host third-seeded Lumpkin the following week.



Joe Collins

Tips from the Range

This week's tips will interest those of you who play golf on a regular basis and find yourself with a shot that is not quite full.

Many of these shots are approach shots that affect the position of the ball on the green and have a direct influence on your overall score. These shots, that are not quite full yardage shots, are typically played with the shortest iron in your bag and are called "half shots". These shots range from 10 yards up to 75 yards and can test your patience to the fullest. Many clubs are broken within this short yardage range.

The key to striking these shots cleanly is acceleration. Just like chipping and putting, it is the acceleration of the club head that is important when faced with these little monsters. All too often we make a backswing that is way to long and find the club slowing down as it approaches impact and this will cause all sorts of problems. You will see fat shots, skulls that fly across the green like bullets, shanks and high lofted short little nothings that leave you with a long putt when you slow the club down through impact. It will drive you crazy and can even make the preacher cuss. Trust me, I've heard it!

The best way to combat these shots is to stay away from them. Use your game management to leave you with a comfortable yardage into the green. For example: If you are good with your sand wedge and can consistently hit it a certain yardage then try and hit a club from the tee or fairway that will leave you that comfortable yardage from the green. Don't hit a club that will leave you with less than a full swing on your next shot. The pros do this on a regular basis and you should too. You will find that it is easier to hit the green with a full shot instead of a half shot. Also, a full shot will hold the green better than a half shot giving you more control over the distance your ball will roll following its landing on the putting surface of the green.

Unfortunately, the half shot is usually the result of a

missed approach shot and is not exactly what you were trying to do. This scenario is what makes the half shot so frustrating because you just missed an easier shot and now you are faced with a more difficult shot than you had previously. Have you ever been in this position? If you play golf a lot you have, and will in the future if you haven't yet, so here is what to do when it happens.

First, don't get mad at yourself for missing the easy shot. Stay calm and focus on the shot at hand. Play the game one shot at a time. You probably still have a chance to make par so follow the bad shot with a good one and let the putter save you.

Next, find a comfortable stance over the ball that is slightly open with the hands ahead of the club head. Make sure you are balanced and centered. Keep the lower body quite by allowing most of your weight to stay on the front foot and don't promote a weight transfer through the legs. Use your shoulders to move the club away from the ball and keep your wrist from hinging on the backswing. This will help you accelerate through impact.

Finally, let the shoulders move the club back and through. Make sure the backswing is shorter than the follow through. A backswing that is longer than the follow through will cause the club to slow down through impact instead of speeding up. Keep your eye on the ball and don't move your head. If you move your head, the shoulders will dip and you will not make solid impact.

The half shot is one of the hardest shots in golf and must be practiced. When you practice these shots, judge how far back a comfortable backswing will cause the ball to travel in the air. Be aggressive and don't be scared. Allow the back shoulder to do its work and keep the club moving. Remember, a shorter backswing is better and the more you practice the better feel you will have.

Next week we will look at another very difficult shot: The Bunker Wood.

Also, send "tips" your questions on some of the problems you are having. You can email me at jcollins.tcherald@windstream.net.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

JV Panthers too much for Rabun County in 28-6 win

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Union County's Junior Varsity squad improved to 2-0 on the season following a 28-6 victory over Rabun County.

The Panthers outscored the Wildcats 14-0 in the second half after Rabun put 6 on the board right before halftime.

Union got on the board first when Rabun fumbled the game's opening kick and freshman Sam Gilbert pounced on the loose football at the 32-yard line.

Sophomore quarterback Ralston Drake connected on a 28-yard pass and two plays later, Drake took it in himself for a 6-0 lead.

The Panther defense made two fourth down stops sandwiched around a Drake interception.

The Union quarterback answered with a 4-yard rushing touchdown to take a 14-0 lead with 7:08 left in the half.



Freshman running back Nick Whittle carries the ball as sophomore Adam Williams pancakes a defender. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Panthers made another fourth down stand at their own 11-yard line and drove out to the 34 where they punted back to Rabun.

The Wildcats would use a methodical 74-yard drive to punch it into the endzone with

56 seconds left in the half.

The Panthers came out in the second half with Joseph Mancuso behind center and the freshman signal caller scored Union's first points of the second half with a 6-yard run set up by a 30-yard pass

The Panthers would take advantage of a fumbled punt inside the Wildcat 10-yard line to score its final touchdown of the game. Nick Whittle would punch it in from 6 yards out to put on an exclamation point on Union's win.

The Panthers relied on a bend-but-don't-break defense for the majority of the game as they continuously stopped Rabun on fourth down.

"Our defense was on the field for most of the game," Coach Cullen Robertson said. "I only think they punted twice during the entire game and we stopped them on fourth down at least four times."

Next week the Panthers travel to Gilmer County to take on the Bobcats.

"I think we need to be able to run the ball better," Robertson said. "Although I think we did a better job of running the football in the second half. We throw the ball well whenever we can give our quarterbacks enough time."

Football...continued from page 10A

After some tough sledding in the first two games, Hughes was relieved to finally have a breakout performance.

"This feels good," Hughes said. "I almost forgot what it feels like but I'm glad it happened. I had to sit out part of the game last week from dehydration. Now I'm ready for region play."

Trailing 31-14, the Wildcats continued to unravel, thanks to a relentless Panther pass rush that allowed Kim to pick off a pass and return it to the Andrews 22-yard line. On the first play following the interception, and with Andrews reeling, Union County went for the jugular.

Bentley scrambled to

his right and hit Rivera in the back of the endzone for another Panther touchdown. The senior wide receiver out jumped the Andrews corner back for his second score of the game.

"I connected with me and found me in the corner," Rivera said. "When he started scrambling, he pointed to the corner of the end zone and I ran to it and just went up and got it."

The wheels officially fell off for Andrews, when after forcing Union to punt, Hougrand was able to recover a bad snap, run for some daylight and get off a punt that was downed inside the 4-yard line. On the next play, Andrews suffered from a bad snap when the quar-

terback couldn't handle the low snap and the ball was batted out of the back of the endzone for a safety with 4:41 to play.

The final score of 40-14 is significant since its the first time Union County has reached the 40-point plateau in front of the home crowd, since 2009, when the Kolt Owenby/Blake Gowder show was in town.

"The beautiful thing about it is, we faced some adversity when they tied the game," Coach Allison said. "We came back and outscored them 26-0 after that and that's a good thing for us. Maybe that's the way it was supposed to be. To face a little adversity then have some success. That's a sign that our team is getting

better."

Afterwards, Coach Rogers presented Coach Allison with the game ball to signify Allison as Union's winningest football coach.

"I'm happy that it was a former player that broke the record," Coach Rogers said. "The funny thing is, the first game I ever coached was in 1980 and that was Brian's freshman year. We played Andrews that game and beat them (29-0) for my first coaching win and Brian's first game in high school. Now he broke the record against Andrews."

When asked about breaking the record held by his former mentor, Allison said that the idea of breaking the record had never even crossed his mind when he came home to coach the Panthers.

"I really hadn't given it any thought until last week when someone called and asked me about it," Coach Allison said. "It's an honor to coach at the place you played at. I never thought that this would ever happen."

As Coach Allison addressed the team following the game, emotions were high as seniors CJ Byers and Craig Jones spoke up about what it means to be a Panther.

"I just want to say what an honor it is to be apart of this

team and to play for Coach Allison, and alongside all you guys," Craig Jones said.

"Lets give it up for Coach Allison," Byers shouted as they applauded their coach.

"I love you guys," Coach Allison said. "Nice job battling back tonight."

Now that the wins record is behind them, the Panthers can now turn their attention to Region 8-AA.

Union will have a bye this Friday before opening region play, at home, on Sept. 28.

However, Coach Allison

isn't worried about getting ready for 9th ranked Washington-Wilkes just yet.

"I'm not worried about region play, we've got some things that we need to work on, and we're going to worry about ourselves, and how we can get better," Coach Allison said. "We did some bad things and we did some good things tonight. We've got to get better ourselves, but we're also starting two ninth graders and five 10th graders so there's going to be some growing pains. But I think we'll be healthy and improved after the bye week."



Coach Allison addresses his team after their record setting win over Andrews, NC. Photo/Todd Forrest

Softball...continued from page 10A

national Tiebreaker rule was in effect and Crystal Busbee started the inning on second base. She was advanced to third on a Rich bunt to bring Hughes to the plate. The Lady Dragons wanted no part of the senior slugger and walked her. Brown would strikeout and Courtney Busbee lined out to end the inning.

Jefferson wrapped things up in their half of the inning with a single, a walk, and another single.

Adams went 1-for-3 with a double and Courtney Busbee finished with a 1-for-4 day.

Union takes a week off before participating in the Brookwood Tournament on the 21st and 22nd.

The Lady Panthers will face some stiff competition with four games coming against schools from Class AAAAAA that include the fifth ranked Peachtree Ridge Lady Lions. Union will also face

Dacula, Newnan, and Woodstock, along with Class AAAA's Eastside.

On Thursday, Sept. 27th Union has added a game against former Region 8-AA power, North Oconee.

A rivalry will be renewed when the Lady Panthers travel to Bogart to face the Lady Titans in a rematch of the 2010 8-AA Championship Game. It's also a rematch of the State Final Four elimination game from the same year, which saw Union win all three contests against North Oconee.

Entering the post season, Coach Stewart still sees room for improvement. Especially since the last two teams to have home-field advantage in the Region Tournament, didn't take home the first place hardware.

"Our defense still needs improvement and we need to be more consistent when facing better pitching," Coach Stewart said.

Upward Basketball and Cheerleading

On-line registration for Upward Basketball and Cheerleading will be open Oct. 12th for boys and girls in grades Kindergarten through 6th Grade at www.hopb.org or at www.fununioncounty.org.

The early registration price to participate in basketball is \$65 and cheerleading is \$60. There will be an additional \$10 fee for registrations received after Sept. 20th. If needed, payment plans are available. Practices will take place once a week and they begin the week of Oct. 8th, while games will be held on consecutive Saturdays between Oct. 27th and Dec. 8th (with the exception of the week of Thanksgiving).

Everyone is encouraged to attend one evaluation. These will be held on Sept. 18th and 20th from 6 to 8 p.m. at the House of Prayer Family Life Center.

Form and registration

fees may also be dropped off, Monday through Friday, at First United Methodist's business office or the House of Prayer Family Life Center between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. For more details, contact either church office at FUMC (706) 745-2073 or HOP (706) 745-5925.

Upward Sports, the world's largest Christian sports program for children, was created with a vision to introduce kids and families to Jesus Christ and to provide the best sports experience possible for every child while ensuring equal playing time for all.

Each year some 1 million people around the world play, coach, referee, or volunteer in Upward Sports leagues and camps hosted by more than 2,600 churches. Anyone - children and volunteers of any faith or no faith - can participate in Upward Sports. The goal of Upward Sports is to bring out "the winner" in every child - regardless of the game's score.

Rec Basketball Registration

Basketball Registration
Ages 5-8
Fee: \$40

Register the whole month of Sept.

Basketball Registration
Ages 9-14
Fee: \$40

Register the whole month of Oct.

Check out the website:
www.unioncountyrecreation.com
(706)439-6074

MUSA Rockfest another hit

In its first year at a new location, the fundraising event for Mountain United Soccer Association, GA Top Soccer, Cole Bowen, and Recording Artists Against MS, was a huge success!

Three local bands, 12 Gauge Persuaders, Ratz, and Modern Vinyl entertained the crowd all afternoon. Shad Bradley graciously MC'd the event throughout the day, with sound expertise provided by Michael Kennedy, and videography by Sean Clyde of C&C Media.

Spectators feasted on fresh smoked Pulled Pork sandwiches, Baby Back ribs and Turkey Legs by Chef Bill Minkert. Volunteers manned the ticket booths and food booths, and the event couldn't have happened with all of them who gave so freely of their time.

David Zeger ran the Corn Hole Tournament which was a thrill for young and old alike. Georgia Soccer Association gave away free shirts all day long and had plenty of soccer balls and beach balls for the kids to play with. Raffles held throughout the day with prizes provided by Best Buy, and The Lodge at Copperhead gave spec-

tators a little something extra to take with them besides the memories of a great day filled with music and fun.

This event, in its fifth year, would not be possible without the support of our local businesses, family sponsors and most importantly, Richard Smith, founder of MUSA and the hardest working volunteer for this event every year. Patronize our sponsors, and let them know how important their support is for keeping kids in soccer and helping those suffering with Multiple Sclerosis.

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