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Lady Panthers starting to peak in time for postseason

By Todd Forrest North Georgia News sports@nganews.com

Union County (15-10, 8-3) will be riding a fourgame winning streak entering the final week of the regular

Losers of seven of their last nine games, Union roared back with an undefeated week, sparked by a pair of non-Region wins over East Hall and Lumpkin, then capped off in front of the home crowd by sweeping a double header from Washington-Wilkes on Senior Night. The Lady Panthers trav-

eled to Lumpkin on Monday and have games at Rabun County and at North Murray slated for this week. Union was victorious in the first meeting against each of the three teams and will be looking for the season sweep.

Union has already locked themselves into the third seed in 8-AA and will host Washington-Wilkes in the opening round of the Region Tournament. The matchup will be a best 2-of-3 series beginning on Tuesday, Oct. 1st. If necessary, the third game would be played on Oct. 2nd. If the Lady Panthers take the series, they would secure their fifth consecutive State Playoff berth.

Union County 3 East Hall 1

The Lady Panthers paid a visit to Valhalla last Monday with the direction of their season at stake.

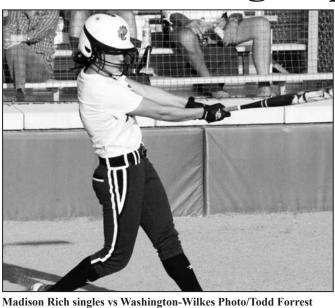
And despite being a non-Region game, Ûnion left with a much needed confidence boost, thanks to a 3-1 victory over the East Hall Lady Vikings.

Freshman Laken Chambers' drove in all three runs on three hits that included a tworun homer (2). She also picked up the win, working a complete game, scattering six hits and striking out seven.

The Lady Vikings, however, struck first in the second inning thanks to a lead off double and a two-out single.

It would remain a 1-0 game until Union got two in the fourth. Sophomore Johnah Langston reached on an error, setting the stage for Chambers. The Lady Panther pitcher sent a high fly over the centerfield fence for a two-run blast.

Union added an insurjunior Hallye King reached on time. We've got to hit and can't



loaded the bases when the

East Hall shortstop couldn't

handle a grounder. With the

bags packed, Chambers came

through again with a base hit

simply returning the favor for

a loss to East Hall earlier this

month at the Veterans' Tourna-

ment in Oconee County. But

to Union County Head Coach

Jessica Stewart, this game was

about regrouping her troops and

Lady Vikings came in the midst

spells under Coach Stewart's

command. However, following

a win over White County and an

extra inning loss at Jefferson,

Coach Stewart had a feeling

that her Lady Panthers were

about to find their groove with

the post season right around

"These girls are capable of big things," Coach Stewart

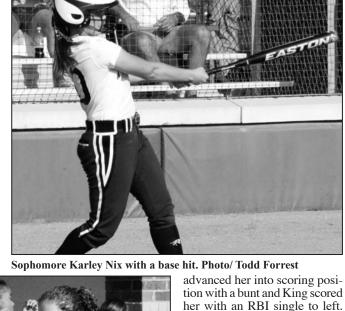
said last week after three tough

The earlier loss to the

County way.

You could say Union was

to center, scoring King.



Lumpkin got two in their final

at bat thanks to a leadoff walk,

Union County 9

run-ruled the Lady Tigers in the

seniors Madison Rich and Allie

Stroman, the Lady Panthers quick-

ly disposed of Washington-Wilkes

so the Senior Night celebration

the offense with a 2-for-3 day that

included a double and a career-

high 4 RBIs. Courtney Busbee

doubled during a 2-for-3 perfor-

mance that resulted in 2 RBIs.

Crystal Busbee was 1-for-2 with

plenty of help from the freshmen

on Senior Night with Chambers

finishing 2-for-3 with an RBI, and

the win from the circle. Kendra

Tanner and Arrowood finished

control of the game right off the

bat thanks to a 6-run first inning.

and Rich singled to open the game.

King loaded the bases with a walk

and Chambers scored Crystal

with two runs a piece.

a walk, a double, and a run.

could get started early.

first game of a double header.

Washington-Wilkes 0

Chambers (8-5) threw a two-hitter as the Lady Panthers

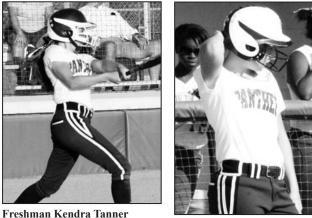
As Union County honored

Sophomore Karley Nix led

Union County also got

The Lady Panthers snatched

a triple, and a single.



Maddie Garrett and Head Coach Jessica Stewart Photo/Todd Forrest

Union County 8 Lumpkin County 4

The positive mojo of the young softballers continued to build as they went to Lumpkin County and feasted on the Lady Indians' pitching staff to the tune of 8 runs on 12 hits.

Five Union hits went for getting back to playing softball extra bases including a two-run the right way – the Union blast (3) of the bat of freshman Laken Chambers, staking Union to a 7-1 lead in the fifth inning.

'We are playing much of one of Union's worst losing better softball all the way around," Coach Stewart said. We started hitting and both (Crystal) Busbee and Chambers are giving us an opportunity to win. I felt like the Jefferson game could have went either way and that proved to the girls that we can win the Region this year regardless of the probability of us going in the tournament as the No. 3 seed."

Chambers went 4-for-Region losses. "We just need 4 at the plate with 5 RBIs, ance run in the fifth when all aspects clicking at the same two doubles, and a homer. Sophomore Maddie Garrett and

now we will do well in the post and Crystal Busbee was hit by a pitch twice, scored twice, and drove in one. She also picked up the win – striking out 10, while surrendering 7 hits and 2 earned runs. Union County's scoring

began when leadoff Crystal Busbee was hit on a 3-1 pitch in the first inning. Courtney Busbee reached on an infield single, and Chambers doubled to right - scoring Crystal and the courtesy runner. Freshman Lydia Arro-

wood reached on an error to open the second, Garrett advanced her to third with a double, before Crystal Busbee brought her in on a sacrifice fly. In the third, King was hit

by a pitch and Courtney Busbee scored her on a double. Chambers followed suit with an RBI double of her own, giving Union a 5-0 lead after three. Lumpkin got an unearned

run in the top of the fifth but Union retaliated when Courtney Busbee walked and Chambers went yard, putting the Lady Panthers ahead 7-1.

An RBI single got the Lady Indians another run in the a leadoff walk. Junior Courtney Busbee each doubled sixth but Crystal Busbee was this is the most important time of the year and if we get hot infield single, and Langston of the year and if we get hot open Union's half of the inning. Madison Rich

Stroman and Rich embrace

way, and of course her team-

mates to become the player

the daughter of Jay and Tonya

Stroman and has played soft-

ball for 13 years and for four

years at Union County High

moments were the camping

trip during her sophomore year

when the coaches took the team

to a haunted house and "Cagle

thought all the particles in her

and Coach Stewart zip-line at

the team camp, beating Jeffer-

son on "our field," and getting

to play every season with one

of her best friends, Madison

pictures were ghosts.'

School.

Allie Stroman: Allie is

Her most memorable

Watching Coach Cagle

Garrett smacked a base hit, then Karley Nix singled in two. Langston brought in the fifth and sixth run on an error by the Washington-Wilkes first baseman.

Both offenses would remain silent until the fifth when Chambers led off with a base hit. Courtney Busbee followed with an RBI double. Karley Nix's two-run double ended the contest in the

Union County 15 Washington-Wilkes 8

On three different occasions it appeared Union would run-rule Washington-Wilkes in the second game, but that wasn't The Lady Panthers held an

11-2 lead after two innings but we unable to score in the third or fourth innings to put it away. Union eventually made it 12-2 but the Lady Tigers put up six runs in the fifth to make it a game again at 12-8. However, three more Union runs in the sixth and Chambers returning to pitch the final two innings of the contest was enough to put Washington-Wilkes on ice.

With the Lady Tigers returning to Blairsville next week for the first round of the Region Tournament, Union was looking to make a statement, and the offense certainly did. The Lady Panthers will face Washington-Wilkes in a best 2-out-of-3 series beginning on Oct. 1st with Union's fifth consecutive State Playoff berth on the line.

'We were playing in honor of Rich and Stroman and the girls were fired up and came out hitting well," Coach Stewart said. "We needed that just in case we see them in the First Round of the Region Tournament." Courtney Busbee, Kelsey

Nix, Rich, Garrett, and Tanner each drove in two runs. While Karley Nix, Chambers, and King added an RBI a piece. Crystal Busbee (7-5) got

the win, working 5 innings, allowing 8 hits, 4 earned out, and striking out five.

Chambers gave up one hit in 2 innings, striking out five in They would put up three more in the fifth to bring the mercy rule Union County traveled

Črystal Busbee doubled to Lumpkin County on Monday before rounding out Region play on Tuesday at Rabun.

The regular season con-Busbee with an opposite field cludes on Wednesday when the single. Courtney Busbee hit into a Lady Panthers visit North Murray fielder's choice that scored Rich, for a makeup game.

8-AA Region Standings

Team	OVR	LEAG
Jefferson	19-5-0	11-1-0
Current Streak: 3 W		
Social Circle	18-5-0	10-2-0
Current Streak: 1 W		
Union County	15-10-0	8-3-0
Current Streak: 4 W		
Oglethorpe County	13-10-0	5-7-0
Current Streak: 2 L		
Rabun County	9-14-0	4-7-0
Current Streak: 2 W		
Washington-Wilkes	9-14-0	3-9-0
Current Streak: 4 L		
Greene County	0-12-0	0-12-0
Current Streak: 12 L		

The 8-AA standings are set with the exception of fourth place Oglethorpe County and fifth place Rabun ing their fourth consecutive

on Tuesday, the Lady Wildfourth spot and host Oglethorpe County in the No. 4 vs No. 5 series.

Region 8-AA play at home on Oct. 1st with Washington 12th - hosted by the higher Wilkes at 4 and 6 p.m.

The "if necessary" game would be Oct. 2nd at

If victorious, Union

will travel to Social Circle for the second round where the Lady Panthers will be seek-8-AA Region Championship

If Rabun defeats Union Game. The second round becats would move into the gins on Oct. 8th with the "if necessary" game being held on Oct. 9th.

The Region Champion-Union County will open ship and consolation games will be on Saturday Oct.

> The State Tournament will begin the following week with Region 8 facing Region 6 in the first round.

Fish for Food Fishing Tournament

Matthew 25 Food Ministries presents "Fish for Food Fishing Tournament". 60% of tournament money goes to feed needy families in our area. The remaining 40% will go to tournament prize money. Prize money will be awarded for 1st Place, 2nd Place and 3rd Place and biggest fish. Actual prize amount will depend on number of entries.

Entry fee is \$50 per boat, the tournaments end in October, occurring the second Saturday of each

> from 7 a.m. - 1 p.m. Tournament schedule: October 12 - Nottely. For contact information call David Crisp at 706-897-5347.

month rotating between

Lake Chatuge, Woods Grove

Boat Ramp and Lake Notte-

ly, Deaver Road Boat Ramp,

Union County Softball honors its seniors

By Todd Forrest North Georgia News sports@nganews.com

Union County Softball said goodbye to its two seniors last Thursday night at the Union County Softball Complex. Madison Rich and Allie

Stroman were freshmen when Union finished second in State after winning the program's first Region 8-AA Champion-The following year they

were on Union County's second straight 8-AA Championship winning team.

Last season, both were full time starters and helped lead Union back to the Region Title Game where they came up one run short.

Now they are looking to go out with four State Playoff trips on their resume and a third Region Championship when the dust settles next month. "It has been a joy to

coach and watch Allie and Madison over the years develop into productive athletes and young ladies," Union County Head Softball Coach Jessica Stewart said. "They have both become an important part of our team and program. They are very dedicated and I truly appreciate being able to coach the two of them."

Madison Rich: Madison is the daughter of Ricky and Sabrina Rich and has played softball for 13 years and for five years at Union County High School.

Her most memorable moments were the State Championship Game her freshman year against Buford. Camping and going into the haunted house during her sophomore year. Making Coach "Stew" mad by singing on the bus rides, and playing every season with Allie (Stroman).

"I would like to thank



Senior Night festivities. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union County's Madison Rich (second from right) with family during Senior Night festivities. Photo/Todd Forrest

God first and most of all because without him, none of this would be possible," Rich said. lie (Stroman) for never giving up and sticking with me to the

and Matthew and Mimi for coming to her games throughout the years, supporting her no Coach Stewart, Coach Cagle, matter what, and always being and all of the other coaches

up and sticking with me to the She thanked her parents end, and always being there for a pick-me-up," she said. Finally she thanked

"I also want to thank Al-

who have helped her along the

Her future plans are to attend either Mercer or Vanderbilt University and major in Biology. Then become a pediatrician and provide health care to the children in the United States and around the world.

She would like to pass her bat down to her younger sister Holly Stroman. "I love her very much,"

Allie Stroman said to her freshman sister, Holly.