

Sports

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Barnett steals the show as UC racks up 628 yards in win at Greene

Panthers improve to 7-0 thanks to 28 points combined in first and fourth quarter

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Greensboro - The first three quarters belonged to quarterback Joseph Mancuso and the Union receivers. However the final 12 minutes was all Chase Barnett and Bo Lynch as the Panthers offensive line and rushing attack punished the Tigers during crunch time.

Union outscored Greene 14-0 in the first and fourth quarters. When the dust settled, the Panthers walked away with a 42-27 victory.

"This team has a lot of heart," Panthers Head Coach Brian Allison said. "But not one of them bigger than number 44 (Barnett)."

With a 28-14 halftime advantage, it appeared as if there would be no stopping Mancuso and his three favorite targets - receivers Jacob Rogers, Robert Prunier, and Sam Gilbert.

During the first half alone, Union's junior gunslinger put up 285 yards through the air with three scores - two to Rogers and the other to Prunier.

Mancuso finished with a season-high 388 yards.

But during the third quarter, Greene County made adjustments on both sides of the ball, resulting in 13 unanswered points. The surge coming out of the break brought the home crowd back to life and stole momentum from the Panthers' sideline.

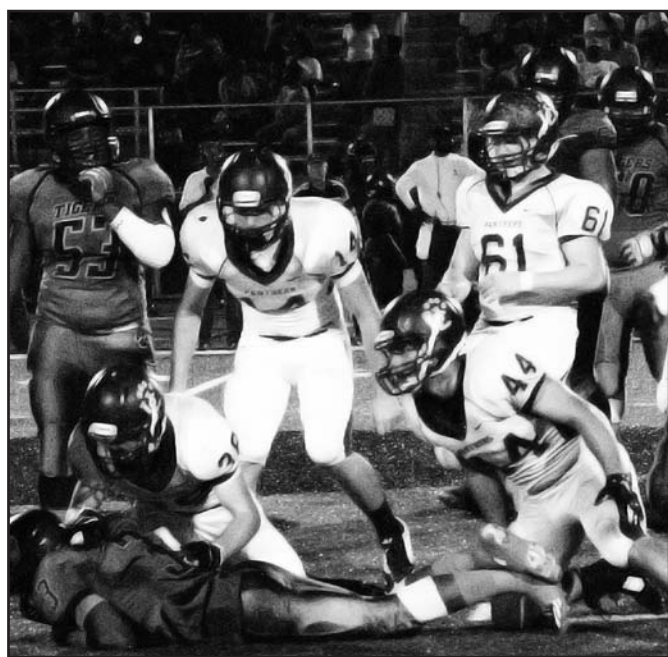
Nursing a 28-27 lead early in the fourth, Union (7-0, 3-0) turned to the running back tandem of Barnett and his partner in crime, Lynch.

For the first time since last year's meeting with Greene County, Union had two different players pass the century mark on the ground.

Barnett, known for his defensive prowess, ran for two career highs with 3 scores and 106 yards. Lynch led the team with 116 yards on the ground, also a career high.

"Our offensive line was smaller and slower than (Greene) but when it came down to it, we are in better shape and we finished the fourth quarter the same way we finished the second quarter," Coach Allison said.

With 45 seconds left in the third quarter, Greene County connected on a 26-yard touchdown



The Union County defense forced three turnovers at Greene County to allow the offense some breathing room during the fourth quarter. Photo/Todd Forrest

pass, making it a 28-27 game. Luckily, the Tigers' All-State kicker Andres Aparicio was unable to get off the extra point as a bad snap denied Greene County the opportunity to tie the game.

When the Panthers took over on their own 20, a 15-yard completion to Gilbert was taken away thanks to a holding call. Another hold put Union in a 2nd-and-26 but the Panthers managed to get some of it back when Greene was flagged for pass interference. Facing a 2nd-and-11, once again, the Panthers, who were penalized 10 times to Greene's five times, lost five yards to a false start.

On 2nd-and-16, Mancuso scrambled to his left, then changed direction back to the right and hit Rogers for 27 yards and a first down.

Barnett carried for a 3-yard gain on first down before Rogers reeled in another reception, moving Union deep into Tiger territory.

With a first down just outside the Greene 30-yard line, Mancuso hooked up with Prunier for 8 yards, and on second down, Barnett carried the ball inside the 10-yard line. However another flag pushed Union back to the 21.

Again, the Panthers would turn to Barnett who picked up 10 yards to the 11-yard line. Another Barnett carry went for 9 yards and on second down he picked up a yard, giving Union a 1st-and-goal

at the 1-yard line.

On the Tigers' goal line, the Panthers went back to Barnett and the senior recorded his second touchdown of the game. With 8:39 left in the game, Union was on top 35-27.

The Greene County offense quickly went back to work with a 45-yard run to the Union 30-yard line.

On first down, junior Tyler McCoy took down the Tiger back behind the line of scrimmage for a loss of three.

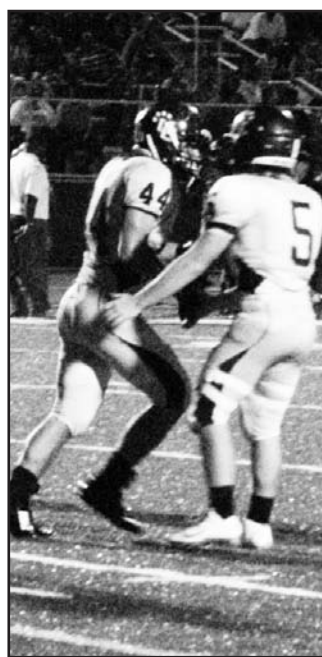
On second down, senior Luke Chatham forced the most important incompletion of the night and possibly the season.

Greene County had made a living all night by throwing a jump ball to their receivers and allowing their athletes to go up and snag the pass over the Union County defensive backs. Facing a 2nd-and-13 from the 33, the Tigers went back to their bread-and-butter.

But Chatham said enough is enough.

On another jump ball to the front corner of the endzone, the Union cornerback went up with the receiver, who appeared to gain possession. However Chatham continued to scrap and claw at the football, and as the two came to the ground, the Tiger wideout was unable to maintain possession.

"I tried to get a good jump and was able to keep them from having another big play," Chatham said. "He had the ball but I was



Lynch (5) celebrates with Barnett (44) following a fourth quarter TD. Photo/Todd Forrest able to knock it loose on the way down."

"They ran that play over and over," Coach Allison added. "That was a great play by Luke. It was a game-saver."

Instead of keeping the offense on the field for the 2-point conversion, Greene was looking at a 3rd-and-13, where sophomore defensive back Zach Stone was able to break up the pass attempt.

On fourth down, the Tigers trotted Aparicio on the field to attempt a 50-yard field goal.

Last year, he was 24-for-25 on extra points, 14-for-17 on field goals, with a long of 47 yards, and had touchbacks on 85 percent of his kickoffs. He is listed as a four-star prospect in the Kohl's Kickers National Ratings System and is being recruited by Missouri as both a football and soccer player.

Aparicio's 50-yard attempt was hindered by a high snap but he was able to get off the kick. It had the distance but started left and continued to hook - missing very wide left.

The Panthers took over at their own 20 with 7:15 to play. With an offense that was almost unstoppable taking the field, the Panthers coaching staff felt good about their chances to make it a two-touchdown game.

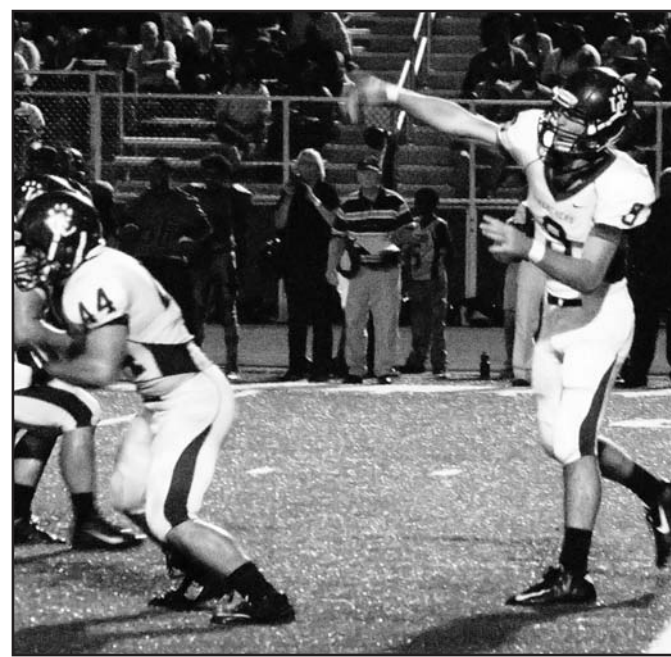
That's when Barnett came to them and asked for the football.

"Yes sir, I wanted the football," Barnett said. "I didn't want to have to come out. I was cramping but I was determined to keep going. We were tired but they were tired too and we just wore them down."

However it was Lynch who began the drive in the backfield while Barnett got some rest.

Lynch's first two carries went for 8 yards and 7 yards with a facemask tacked onto the second carry.

With a first down at their own 40, Lynch carried for 6 yards and Barnett entered and rushed for 17 yards. Lynch carried for 11 more yards before Barnett finished off the drive by plowing forward for 15 yards and finally an 11-yard touchdown with 3:16 to play.



Joe Mancuso (9), Chase Barnett (44) along with Bo Lynch, Robert Prunier and Jacob Rogers, all saved some of their best performances of the year for last Friday night in Greensboro. Photo/Todd Forrest

"He wants the ball all the time," Coach Allison said. "But we have to be careful not to gas him early and we saved him and he ran well."

Trailing 42-27, Greene County had to act fast and made their way inside the Union 10-yard line with the help of a late hit by the Panthers. With just over 2:00 to play, senior linebacker Nic Sparks wreaked havoc in the Tigers' backfield, smacking the Greene quarterback and forcing a fumble that was recovered by senior lineman Reid Watson.

After a first down carry by Lynch, the Panthers offense went into the victory formation and 7-0 became a reality.

The game began with both the Panthers' offense and defense setting the tone.

On Greene's first possession, senior Brett Dietz picked off a Tiger pass that led to Union's first score of the night.

Dietz then hauled in a 44-yard pass from Mancuso that was followed by a 23-yard scoring strike to Rogers at the 3:57 mark of the first.

The Panthers' defense forced a punt on Greene's ensuing possession. Starting at their own 20, Union marched 80 yards in 110 seconds.

A second down pass to Prunier went for 7 yards then a pass to Gilbert was good for 13 yards. Mancuso carried himself

for 6 yards despite almost fumbling the ball away. After Union dodged the near-turnover, Mancuso and Prunier teamed up on a 54-yard touchdown pass that made it 14-0.

A 45-yard touchdown run by Greene made it 14-7 but the Panthers quickly made it 21-7 on a 2-yard scoring run by Barnett. The touchdown was setup by a 22-yard pass to Dietz and a 17-yard reception by Barnett.

A 17-yard touchdown pass cut the Union lead to 21-14 with 1:37 left in the half but Mancuso hit Rogers on a 64-yard scoring strike with 1:11 left in the second, making it 28-14.

Greene County's second score of the third quarter came off Mancuso's first interception of the year.

On 3rd-and-21 near midfield, Mancuso was picked at the 8-yard line and Greene went 92 yards for the score despite having a 90-yard touchdown called back.

Union County stats:
PASSING - Mancuso 16-31, 388 yards, 3 TD's, 1 INT.

RUSHING - Lynch 14 carries, 118 yds, Barnett 15 carries, 106 yds, 3 TDs, Mancuso 9 carries, 21 yards.

RECEIVING - Rogers 5 catches, 129 yds, 2 TDs, Prunier 5 catches, 103 yds, 1 TD, Gilbert 3 catches, 73 yds, Dietz 2 catches, 66 yds, Barnett 1 catch, 17 yards.



The Union County cheerleaders were unable to make it to Oglethorpe but made certain they made it to Greene County to support the undefeated Panthers. Photo/Todd Forrest



Seniors Eli Robledo (79) Robert Prunier (43), and Jacob Witting (68) help move the pile forward. Photo/Todd Forrest

Panthers host Rabun in showdown of 8-AA's only unbeaten teams

Game of the decade: Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium to host the hottest ticket in northeast Georgia on Friday

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Union County is 7-0 for the first time since 2001 and are on the verge of cracking the *Atlanta Journal Constitution's* high school football poll for the first time since 1985, but those historical tidbits will be quickly forgotten if the Panthers fail to take care of business on Friday night.

Presently there are two undefeated teams left in Region 8-AA, and they will both be in the house at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on Friday.

In what is the most important regular season game played at the stadium in almost 30 years, Head Coach Brian Allison and his senior-laden squad will look for their first win over Rabun County since 2011.

It was 29 years ago this week, when the 6-0 Panthers hosted a 6-0 Banks County squad in a Region 8-AA showdown on Oct. 18th 1985. Unfortunately, the Panthers fell to the Leopards 29-16 and two weeks later lost 35-0 at Commerce.

Meanwhile, 9-0 Banks hosted 9-0 Commerce and lost 34-0. Commerce went on to finish 12-1 with their only loss coming in the State semifinals.

Back in 2001, Union played its four toughest 8-AA games on the road so the only home game of significance came in the first round of State.

A rain soaked field and a



Coach Allison during the game and after the game at Greene County. The Panthers are 7-0 under Allison for the second time in 13 years. To improve to 8-0 Union must get past a Rabun squad that has outscored Union 80-28 in the last two meetings. Photos/Todd Forrest

water-logged fan base watched the Panthers rally from a 21-0 first half deficit to take a 28-21 lead in the fourth quarter.

Unfortunately, Morgan County would put up 10-unanswered points including a game-winning field goal as time expired in a 31-28 ball game.

Fast forward to 2014 and the Panthers are faced with another big-time contest against a big-time opponent at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

Unlike those previous two games, Union is coming in as the

hotter team and are considered the favorites.

But don't tell that to Rabun County.

The Wildcats defeated the Panthers 42-18 last season in Blairsville after outscoring Union 36-7 from the second quarter on.

In 2012, Rabun took a 38-3 advantage before Union added a late touchdown.

However, those two wins didn't come against a Panther team as talented, experienced, or motivated this year's squad. Union features the top scor-

ing offense in all of Class AA at 44 points-a-game and 47 points-per-game in its three Region 8-AA contests.

Junior quarterback Joseph Mancuso is first in Class AA in passing yards (1884), yards-per-game (270), passing touchdowns (25), completions (103), attempts (165), touchdown to interception ratio (25-to-1), and QB rating (138.7). He is third in completion percentage (62%).

Jacob Rogers is tops in Class AA in receiving yards (548), receiving touchdowns (10). Robert Prunier leads Class AA with 28 receptions while Rogers is tied for second with 27 catches.

Rabun County's 6-5 225-pound junior Charlie Woerner is sixth in Class AA with 356 receiving yards, eighth in receptions with 18, and 10th with 3 touchdowns.

He is seventh in AA with 564 rushing yards, and 10th with 6 rushing touchdowns. His 77-yard touchdown run at Social Circle is the third longest while Mancuso's 82-yard carry vs Andrews, NC is first in Class AA.

Woerner's 920 total yards (rushing and receiving) is second in Class AA. In Region action, Rabun's offense is scoring at a clip of 41 points-a-game while allowing just 10-a-game. Union's defense is surrendering 14 points-per-game in Region play.

Union's last win over Rabun came in 2011 by a 10-7 score. Union's last home win over Rabun came in 2010 by a score

of 38-14.

The Wildcats own the all-time series 33-to-16 but the Panthers had won five straight prior to the recent two-game skid.

Beginning in 1958, Rabun County won 12 of the first 13 meetings between the two mountain schools. Union won three-of-four between 1971-1974 before the Wildcats took eight of the next nine contests.

The Panthers again took three-of-four between 1983-1986 but Rabun went 5-0 between 1987-1997. Union won back-to-back games in 2000 and 2001 and the Wildcats took three straight from 2002-2004. From 2005-2011, Union went 6-1.

In last year's meeting, the

Panthers were fresh off a 42-0 rout of Greene County on Homecoming and held an 11-6 lead in the second quarter before the Wildcats outscored Union 36-7. Mancuso was sacked seven times in the second half but still put up 260 yards through the air.

Rabun's offense pounded Union with 360 yards on the ground and 163 yards in the air. The Wildcats also dominated the time of possession 36 minutes to 12 minutes and won the turnover battle 3-to-1.

Two of Rabun's scores came on plays of 60-plus yards. They completed a 73-yard touchdown pass and a 63-yard rushing

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Coach Allison and the Panthers following the win at Greene County last week. Union is now 2-1 all time vs Greene. Photo/Todd Forrest