

'Black out' on Friday as Coach Allison appeals for extra support vs Rabun

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The turnout last Friday at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium was the largest of the season.

The noise levels were at an all time high and the student section was as vocal as ever.

But true to his coaching mentality, Coach Brian Allison refuses to settle. He wants to get more out of the Panther faithful. And that means more people in the stands and a louder, more unified, and "blacked-out" Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

"What we need is for everyone to come out on Friday," Allison said. "We need our stands packed. Full of black. We need everybody here in black."

This Friday night, Union County hosts Rabun County in the most important game of the season, so far.

The Rabun County game is also a "Black Out" game and all fans are encouraged to wear black as they cheer louder than ever before.

If all goes as planned, several hundred Union Countians will



Coach Allison addresses his team after an uplifting win over Greene. Now he looks to build on that momentum as Rabun County comes to Blairsville looking to embarrass the Panthers. Photo/Todd Forrest

be hoarse on Saturday morning after the Panthers knock Rabun off its high horse.

The Wildcats have posted 60-plus points twice this season while breaking 50 points twice. However, they have been brought back down to earth with

an overtime loss to Jefferson then a 52-7 whipping at the hands of Washington-Wilkes last week. But Rabun will still ride to Blairsville expecting a win. Especially after the 38-10 drubbing they handed the Panthers last year in a do-or-die game for Union.

Meanwhile, the Panthers' only 2013 Region loss came at Washington-Wilkes a few weeks back, but Jefferson still comes to Blairsville at season's end. So the game with Rabun should determine the No. 3 seed. A Union win could even springboard the



The Panther student section will be out in full force and in black on Friday vs Rabun County. Photo/Todd Forrest

Panthers into a second place Senior Night showdown with Jefferson, who has lost its starting quarterback for the season.

The Rabun game is also a contest between programs on the rise. A few years back, both teams were cellar dwellers in 8-AA, but have emerged in the last two seasons as legit playoff contenders.

This is a battle between two up-and-coming programs to see who can take the next step. Last year Rabun won the battle by getting into State as the No. 4 seed. Now Union has a chance to respond with a win to claim the No. 3 seed.

"We need to do what we did (against Greene) and that is shut down their offense and win," sophomore Andrew Brown said.

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Mancuso breaks loose for 77 yards, sprung by No. 72 Parker Daniel's key block. Photo/Todd Forrest

changed punts for the entire quarter until Union found themselves on the move late in the third. A roughing the passer flag on Greene put Union into field goal range but the kick sailed wide left and the quarter ended with the Panthers still holding a 28-0 advantage.

The Tigers drove back into the Union redzone but another fourth down stop kept Greene off the board.

Union quickly swung the field position battle back into its favor when Mancuso broke a quarterback keeper for 77 yards on the second play of the drive. With the Panthers on the 2-yard line, the offense went back to its power formation and Barnett took the snap into the endzone for his third score of the game, putting the Tigers away for good at 35-0 with 7:20 to play.

On the ensuing kickoff, Coach Allison did what he had done all night. Senior kicker T.J. would sky a short kickoff towards the sideline, forcing one of Greene's up backs to field the kick and taking Greene's explosive kick returner out of the equation. However, Greene mishandled the kick and Dietz dove on the football, giving possession back to the Panthers as a stunned Greene County sideline could only look on in disbelief. "They were supposed to have been skied and kicked a little higher but T.J. (Smith) was missing them a little bit," Coach Allison said. "But they had people there and in position and we weren't expecting to get the ball, we were just trying to sky the kick over there to keep from giving them a cheap score on a kickoff return."

The Panthers turned to Whittle who accumulated all 36

panther yards on the drive, including a 15-yard facemask flag that he drew on an exhausted Tiger defender. With 4:20 to play, Whittle put the finishing touches on Union's dominating performance with a 6-yard score.

"We ran the ball really good tonight and it was nice to see us finally running the ball better," Coach Allison said.

For Greene, the kickoff that followed Whittle's score only added insult to injury. Smith's high kick was again misplayed by the Tigers and senior Chase Stencil picked up the live ball.

The Panthers ran out the clock by inserting freshman quarterback Bo Lynch in a running back. Lynch would pick up two Union first downs on the ground allowing the Panthers to run out the clock, finally allowing the Panther coaches and players to enjoy Spirit Week and Homecoming.

Barnett not only led the team in scoring but in tackles as well. The junior linebacker recorded 8 tackles and caused a fumble. Junior Luke Chatham caused a fumble to go along with 4 tackles. Drake recorded 4 tackles, recovered a fumble, and broke up two passes. Prunier had four stops and broke up a pass, Jones had 4 tackles for a loss, and Stencil and Dietz had 3 tackles each.

After dismantling Greene, along Oglethorpe and Riverside in previous weeks, all the Panthers must do is win one of their final three games to reach the State Tournament for the first time since 2001. One of the three teams left for Union is winless Social Circle, who lost 63-0 to Rabun and 49-0 to Greene.

But with the Panthers' con-

fidence at levels we haven't seen in a long while, just reaching the playoffs isn't enough.

On Friday, the Panthers will look to improve their positioning in 8-AA as Union hosts a banged up Rabun County squad who has been brought back down to earth following two physical losses. The first to Jefferson, 26-20 in overtime and the second was a beat down at the hands of Washington-Wilkes, 52-7. The Wildcats' pride may have taken a hit, but nothing is more dangerous than a wounded wildcat, fighting for its life. Rabun was averaging more than 60 points-per-game during its first three Region contests before their schedule flipped from cupcakes to contenders, a few weeks back.

Last year, Rabun was in the same boat, coming off two losses and still routed the Panthers 38-10. Although, Union won't be coming off a devastating loss to Greene like they were in 2012. Regardless of the time that's passed, that loss to the Wildcats is still bitter in the mouths of the Panthers, and you could tell it after the Greene game when the team met at midfield.

"We get Lee Shaw's boys next week," Jones shouted to his teammates. The rest of the Panthers let out a shout as the juices began to flow again, this time with Rabun on their minds. Immediately the Panthers began bumping chests and high-fiving, sensing that the time has finally arrived to avenge the ugly loss at Frank Snyder Stadium last year.

"I think our kids will be fired up and ready to play and we need everyone to come out to Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on Friday," Coach Allison said.



Junior Nic Sparks delivers a hit while junior Robert Prunier (43) is in pursuit. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Pride of the Mountains band takes a break to watch the action on the field. Photo/Todd Forrest

Passing Stats

#		CMP	ATT	%	YDS	YDS/ATT	LNG	TD	FUM	INT
9	Mancuso, Joseph	13	24	54.2%	226	9.4	73	2	2	-
	Total	13	24	54.2%	226	9.4	73	2	2	-

Rushing Stats

#		ATT	YDS	AVG	LNG	TD
5	Lynch, Bo	5	16	3.2	11	0
9	Mancuso, Joseph	9	108	12	79	0
11	Drake, Rolston	1	0	0	0	0
22	Rogers, Jacob	1	16	16	16	0
40	Whittle, Nick	18	98	5.4	21	1
44	Barnett, Chase	6	10	1.7	4	3
	Total	40	248	6.2	79	4

Receiving Stats

#		REC	YDS	AVG	LNG	TD	FUM
-	Wallis, Clay	0	0	0	0	0	-
22	Rogers, Jacob	7	165	23.6	73	1	-
28	Dietz, Brett	0	0	0	0	0	-
33	Moose, Dalton	1	0	0	0	0	-
40	Whittle, Nick	1	0	0	0	0	-
43	Prunier, Robert	4	62	15.5	40	1	-
82	Gilbert, Sam	0	0	0	0	0	-
	Total	13	227	17.5	73	2	-

UCHS Homecoming Parade 2013



The Junior Class float



The Senior Class float



The Sophomore Class float. Photos/John Spaulding