

Sports

See the Sports Section at ngame.com

Panthers stumble at Greene; season on the line at Rabun

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

GREENSBORO - A slew of mishaps were too much to overcome as a young, but talented Greene County team pulled away in the second half for a 37-19 final.

During a week where the 8-AA playoff picture would begin to come into focus, Union let a 19-14 halftime advantage slip through their fingers due to six turnovers. The loss at Greene sets up what could arguably be a do-or-die game for the Panthers this Friday night in Rabun County.

"We've got three games left this season," Coach Brian Allison told his team after the loss. "If we want a fourth game, we're going to have to win two of those three games."

First place and 8th-ranked Jefferson appears to have separated themselves from the rest of 8-AA, and await the Panthers at season's end, creating a must-win-scenario for Union at Rabun County.

"Playoff-wise, Rabun is a game we must win," Coach Allison said.

The Panthers, who still control their own destiny, could have taken a major step towards a playoff berth, but remain on the outside looking in, after five second half giveaways derailed the Panthers at Greene County.

Early on it appeared as if the Panthers and Tigers were competing to see who could shoot themselves in the foot more often.

Greene took its opening drive into Panther territory by challenging Union's much-heralded defensive front. The Tigers pounded the Panthers to the tune of three first downs on six consecutive rushes.

Greene began to implode when they were called for three delay of games, that were followed by a Jacob Rogers sack, putting Greene in an obvious punting situation on 4th-and-34.

The Panthers took over at Greene's 47-yard line, where Clay Burnette and Jonathan Hughes combined for 13 yards on consecutive runs. Bentley



Sophomore Chase Barnett has been one of Northeast Georgia's leading tacklers during the 2012 season with 103. The linebacker again led the way at Greene County with 16 tackles. Photo/Todd Forrest

would connect with Cody Davenport on 3rd-and-1 to keep the drive alive. A substitution infraction and offsides penalty by the Tigers moved Union inside the 5-yard line, where T Bentley scored on a 3-yard rushing touchdown.

The extra-point was blocked but Union held a 6-0 lead with 2:28 to play.

Greene would score the next 14 points sparked by a 41-yard touchdown pass on 2nd-and-13. The Panthers coughed up the ensuing kickoff that set up a 7-yard scoring pass on 3rd-and-Goal.

Trailing 14-6, the Panthers took over at midfield, Hughes, Bentley, and Burnette used their wheels to keep moving the chains. Bentley's shovel-pass to Burnette eventually put the Panthers in the end zone from 11-yards out, but not before the senior quarterback had a rushing score called back thanks to a false start flag. Union's two-point conversion attempt was unsuccessful and the Panthers trailed 14-12 with 9:10 to play in the half.

Union County benefited from some good karma when Greene also muffed its kickoff return that was recovered by Chase Barnett.

Taking over at the Tiger 35-yard line, Bentley was sacked for an 8-yard loss on 3rd-and-5 but would make up for it with a quick strike to Lalo

Rivera over the middle for a 22-yard gain on 4th-and-13. One play later, Burnette would find himself in the end zone for the second time after taking another shovel pass from Bentley in from 16 yards.

With 7:19 to play in the second quarter, Union County led 19-14. The Panthers didn't score again.

Both offenses swapped punts until the final minute of the half when Brett Dietz picked off a Tiger pass and maneuvered his way to the Greene 37-yard line with 33 seconds remaining. A sack on Bentley knocked the Panthers out of field-goal range but a sideline completion to Jared Croskey at the 25-yard line gave Eric Hougrand a chance to tack three more on the board from 42-yards out but the kicked sailed wide left.

Add it all up and Union could've easily been ahead anywhere from 22-14 to 24-7. Instead, a five-point game and headed into the break without momentum or a daunting lead.

Despite being out-gained and suffering four unsportsmanlike conduct flags, Union was still ahead, although Coach Allison wasn't pleased with Union's first half performance.

"We laid an egg in that first half," Coach Allison told

his squad at intermission. "We were penalized seven times in the first half and that's way too much. We need to quit getting these stupid penalties and come out and drive it down their throats."

The second half - nothing but daggers. The first came on the third play of the half after Union took over at its own 28-yard line. A 3rd-and-8 pass from Bentley was intercepted and taken 35 yards for a Tiger score. Greene's two-point attempt failed and less than 90 seconds into the second half, Union trailed 20-19.

The second one - a Greene County 91-yard rushing touchdown.

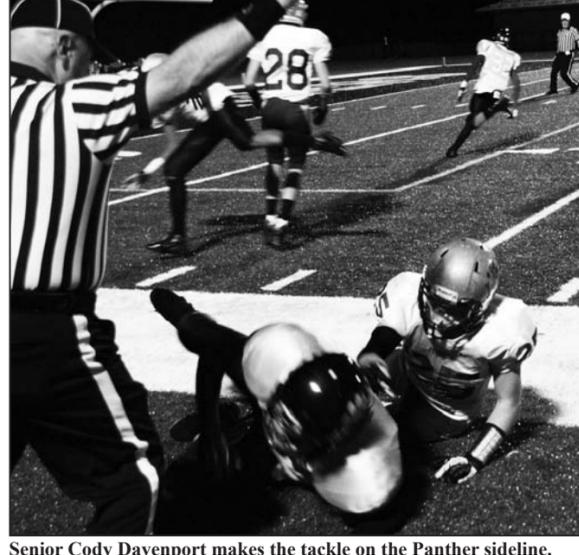
Greene scored 14 points on one play from scrimmage, and that spelled trouble for the Panthers in the opening minutes of the half.

Greene's second dagger came on the heels of a 29-yard run by Bentley to put the Panthers into Greene County territory but the drive stalled and Union had to punt. Hougrand's punt pinned the Tigers at the 9-yard line but on the first play of the series, Greene's quarterback was off to the races for his 91-yard score.

After digging its way out of a 14-6 hole in the first quarter, Union was unable to mount any second half offense in front of a hostile Greensboro crowd.



T Bentley carries the ball at Greene County. The QB accounted for all three of Union's touchdowns. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Cody Davenport makes the tackle on the Panther sideline. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Panthers suffered from another third down fumble on the next drive but Josh Kim snatched a Greene County pass at the 8-yard line. The offense came back on the field and fumbled on the first play. And to make matters worse, Union was flagged for another unsportsmanlike conduct following the fumble.

The Panther defense dug in and only allowed a 22-yard field goal to keep the Panthers in the game.

Facing a 30-19 deficit, a solid kick return from Kim gave Union the ball at the 44-

yard line. Hughes would pick up a key first down rush on fourth down but the Panthers eventually were forced to punt while facing a 4th-and-11.

Desperately needing a stop, the Panthers allowed a first down completion on 3rd-and-6. Greene County broke a 72-yard run that was negated by a holding call so Jonah Whitmer made the Tigers pay with an interception. Unfortunately, another Panther fumble on fourth down, set up Greene's final score of the evening, a 14-

See Football, page 13A

Cross Country sweeps; now prepping for Region Meet

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Emma Garrison and Jeremy Webb separated themselves from the pack last Wednesday at Meeks Park.

Both Union County runners led the Panther and Lady Panther teams to a first place finish.

The other teams trying to keep pace with Union County were Towns, Gilmer, Lumpkin, and Fannin counties.

Garrison ran off and left the field during the girls meet, finishing with a time of 20:13. Giving the freshman three first place finishes in her last four meets.

Webb, a senior, also left the competition in the dust, setting the pace with a time of 17:33.

Both Union teams dusted the competition with the Lady Panthers coming in first with 33 points.

Finishing second was Gilmer County, third was Fannin County, and fourth was Towns County.

Behind Garrison was sixth overall finisher, sophomore Rachel Todd with a time of 22:54, seventh place Alyssa Arnold came in at 23:31, ninth was freshmen Rachel Vester at 23:57, and 10th place was freshman Stephanie Busse with a time of 23:21.

Twenty-first went to senior Kenna Bauman at 27:47, and 22nd sophomore Hannah Quigley at 28:01.

The Panthers scored 36 points - 24 ahead of second place Gilmer.

Third went to Lumpkin County, fourth to Fannin County, and fifth was Towns County.

With Webb winning first overall, the rest of the Top Seven were fifth place Andrew Nelson, a sophomore at 19:22,



Lady Panthers take off at Meeks Park Meet. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union looks for a strong start at Meeks Park. Photo/Todd Forrest



Rachel Todd



Emma Garrison



Jeremy Webb



Don't look back, because Andrew Nelson is about to pass you. Photo/Todd Forrest

be focusing over the next week -and-a-half on maintaining our endurance, while trying to knock a few more seconds off of our times. Hopefully we will be able to go into the Region Meet healthy and strong."

The Region 8-AA Meet takes place on and around the campus of Oglethorpe County High School in Lexington..

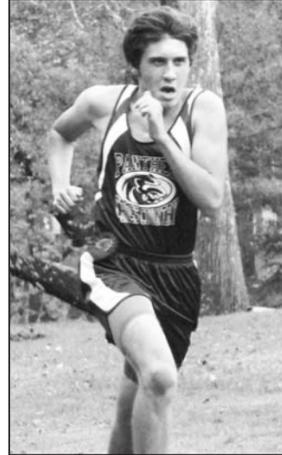
The race will begin and

end on the track at the football stadium.

The Top Four finishing teams will advance to the State Meet in Carrollton.

The Top Six individual finishers will qualify for the State Meet, even if their team fails to qualify.

The rain date for the Region 8-AA Meet will be on Nov. 3rd.



Jacob Cook



Alyssa Arnold