

Sports

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Lady Panthers finish among the top-six in Class AA

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Columbus - The Lady Panthers (15-19) won their opening matchup in Columbus for the first time since 2010, knocking off Region 7-AA Champion Sonoraville 2-1 before suffering consecutive losses to eventual State Champion Morgan County and Pike County to finish 2024 among the final six teams in Class AA.

Lady Panthers 2, Sonoraville 1 - Sloane Dyer's 2-run homer in the first spotted Union an early lead, and sophomore Izzy Anthros tossed a complete game as the Lady Panthers avenged a pair of 10-1 regular season losses to the Phoenix.

Dyer's big fly came on the heels of Jordane Mullanack's two-out single and Anthros went on to limit Sonoraville to five hits over 7 innings of work.

Anthros worked around a 1-out single in the bottom half of the first and the Lady Panthers stranded two runners in the second after Reese Kelley was hit by a pitch and Delaney Moses reached on an error.

Mullanack and Dyer both singled with one away in the third but a strikeout and a pop-up ended the Union threat.

Sonoraville got its lone run in the third when a hit batter came around via a two-out double.

Following a 1-2-3 Union half of the fourth, Sonoraville left a runner in scoring position to keep the score at 2-1. Anthros' base hit led off the fifth, but the Lady Panthers were unable to add to the lead.



Union County qualified for the Class AA Elite 8 for the third time in four years, posting their highest state finish since 2010. Photo/UCHS Softball

Sonoraville had something going in its half of the fifth when a one-out double and a two-out error had runners at the corners, but Anthros escaped the jam by inducing a fly out to center that ended the frame.

Union County stranded two in the sixth when Jules Dyer singled and Kelley walked with one away, and then Sonoraville wasted a leadoff single.

Mullanack singled with two away in the seventh and later, Sonoraville put the tying run aboard courtesy of a 1-out

base hit. But Anthros slammed the door via consecutive fly-outs to end the game.

Mullanack finished 3 for 4 with a run and a stolen base. Sloane Dyer went 2 for 4 with 2 RBIs and a run; Jules Dyer ended her day 1 for 3; Anthros went 1 for 4.

In the circle, Anthros struck out one, walked two and gave up an earned run during a 96-pitch outing.

Lady Panthers 1, Morgan County 11 (5 inn) - Union County couldn't keep pace with a red-hot Morgan County squad on Thursday, Oct. 31,

falling behind 6-0 through two innings.

The Lady Panthers committed four errors in the loss, as Morgan answered Union's lone run with one in the third and four in the fourth.

Four consecutive Morgan County hits, followed by a walk and an RBI groundout put the Lady Panthers in an early 4-0 hole. Later, a leadoff double in the second and a pair of one-out singles made it 6-0 in the bottom of the second.

Kelley started the Union County third with a base hit, followed by one-out singles

from Moses and Anthros to load the bases. But freshman Addison Whitener's sacrifice fly was all the offense they could muster on the day.

A Morgan County double, a stolen base and a groundout stretched the margin to 7-1. Then after Union was sat down 1-2-3 in the fourth, Morgan built an 11-1 advantage courtesy of four singles, a hit batter and an error.

Anthros allowed 4 hits and 4 earned runs over 1/3 of an inning. Kelley worked 2 2/3, giving up 4 hits and 3 earned; sophomore Ayla

Jamison worked an inning, surrendering 3 hits and 4 unearned runs.

Anthros finished 1 for 2 at the dish; Whitener went 0 for 1 and accounted for her team's only RBI; Kelley's day ended 1 for 2; Moses went 1 for 1.

Lady Panthers 0, Pike County 4 - Union County's season ended with a 4-0 loss to Pike County on Friday, Nov. 1 despite each team finishing even in the hit column at seven apiece.

Pike County did all of its damage in the fourth and the fifth innings, scoring two runs in each frame.

Union fell behind 2-0 in the fourth via a catcher's interference and three straight singles. Pike's lead grew to 4-0 in the fifth behind a leadoff double and a 2-run homer.

The Lady Panthers had their chances but couldn't capitalize - starting with Anthros' leadoff double in the bottom of the first. Senior Lily Helton walked to start the second and advanced into scoring position on Jules Dyer's sacrifice bunt.

Anthros and Whitener recorded back-to-back singles with one away in the third, and Jules Dyer's one-out hit went by the wayside during the fourth.

Helton kept the sixth inning alive with a two-out single, and Kelley and Anthros each singled in the seventh.

Anthros went the distance for Union County, allowing 7 hits, 4 walks and 3 earned runs. She finished 3 for 4 with a double at the plate.

Whitener went 1 for 4; Helton was 1 for 2 with a walk; Jules Dyer went 1 for 2; Kelley finished 1 for 3.



Lady Panther fans cheer on the team bus as they depart for Columbus on Tuesday. Photos/Todd Forrest

Basketball: Scrimmage Tuesday; Union Co. men open 9th in Class AA

Date	Opponent	Location	Varsity	JV
Tuesday, Nov. 5	Gilmer	HOME	6:00 / 7:30	
Friday, Nov. 15	Towns	AWAY	7:00 / 8:30	4:00 / 5:30
Saturday, Nov. 16	BOYS - Calvary Day GIRLS - Habersham Central	Habersham Central	4:30 / 6:00	
Friday, Nov. 22	Towns	HOME	7:00 / 8:30	4:00 / 5:30
Tuesday, Nov. 26	Fannin	HOME	7:00 / 8:30	4:00 / 5:30
Friday, Dec. 6	Sonoraville	HOME	7:00 / 8:30	4:00 / 5:30
Saturday, Dec. 7	GIRLS - Temple BOYS - Lithonia	Etowah	1:30 / 4:30	
Tuesday, Dec. 10	LFO	HOME	6:00 / 7:30	Girls 4:30
Friday, Dec. 13	Coahulla Creek	AWAY	7:00 / 8:30	4:00 / 5:30
Saturday, Dec. 14	North Cobb Christian	HOME	3:00 / 4:30	Boys 1:30
Tuesday, Dec. 17	Murray	AWAY	6:00 / 7:30	Girls 4:30
Friday, Dec. 27	BOTS	Towns		
Saturday, Dec. 28	BOTS	Towns		
Monday, Dec. 30	BOTS	Towns		
Friday, Jan. 3	Ringold	HOME	7:00 / 8:30	4:00 / 5:30
Saturday, Jan. 4	Fannin	AWAY	3:00 / 4:30	12:00 / 1:30
Tuesday, Jan. 7	North Murray	AWAY	6:00 / 7:30	Boys 4:30
Friday, Jan. 10	Rockmart	AWAY	6:00 / 7:30	Girls 4:30
Tuesday, Jan. 14	Sonoraville	AWAY	6:00 / 7:30	Girls 4:30
Friday, Jan. 17	LFO	AWAY	7:00 / 8:30	4:00 / 5:30
Tuesday, Jan. 21	Coahulla Creek	HOME	6:00 / 7:30	Girls 4:30
Friday, Jan. 24	North Cobb Christian	AWAY	5:30 / 7:00	Boys 4:00
Tuesday, Jan. 28	Murray	HOME	6:00 / 7:30	Boys 4:30
Friday, Jan. 31	Ringold	AWAY	7:00 / 8:30	4:00 / 5:30
Tuesday, Feb. 4	North Murray	HOME	6:00 / 7:30	
Friday, Feb. 7	Rockmart	HOME	6:00 / 7:30	Boys 4:30

Union County basketball hosts Gilmer on Tuesday, Nov. 5 in a preseason scrimmage ahead of the Nov. 15 opener at Towns County.

The Lady Panthers feature a tough slate in 2024-25 with four opponents ranked among the top-8 in their respective classifications, not including the Battle of the States

Christmas Tournament which will likely feature No. 8 Rabun County.

The girls will face No. 2 Fannin County and No. 4 Temple from Class A D1; No. 3 Murray County and No. 8 Coahulla Creek from AA.

The 9th-ranked men will see the No. 3 private school in Georgia, North Cobb Christian,

and could face No. 7 Rabun County at the Battle of the States.

Union is the only ranked team among public schools in Region 7-AA, but the Panthers will face Calvary Day and Lithonia, along with a pair of Sweet 16 schools from a year ago in Fannin and Towns on their non-region slate.

XC: Hunter first at Sectionals; both Union teams log top-five finishes

Union County to race for State title Saturday in Carrollton

By Todd Forrest
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Jefferson - Junior Lola Hunter torched the field on a chilly Saturday morning at Jackson County's Lamar Murphy Park, taking home first by more than 85 seconds at the Class AA State Sectionals on Nov. 2.

Hunter's time of 19 minutes, 45 seconds paced the Union County ladies (99 points) to a third-place overall finish behind host East Jackson (91) and Coahulla Creek (93). Franklin County (104) and Booker T. Washington (119) rounded out the top five.

The Union County men finished fifth, securing a spot for both UCHS teams at Saturday's State Championships in Carrollton.

Sophomore Oliver Hillman came in ninth with a time of 17:42; Noah James Payne was 31st at 19:05; Bryson Brooks placed 32nd at 19:09; Ander Faulkner crossed the line 36th with a time of 19:16; Andrew Nushstayev was 42nd at 19:33.

Other Union County runners included freshman Cole Brown in 55th with a time of 20:05 and Trey Hawley in 56th at 20:13.

The Panthers finished with 150 points, coming in behind fourth-place Franklin County (142), third-place Rockmart (106), second-place KIPP Atlanta (89) and first-place East



Junior Lola Hunter approaches the finish line on Saturday morning in Jefferson. Photo/Todd Forrest

Jackson (53). Union County edged sixth-place North Murray (181) and seventh-place Hart County (198).

In the girls' race, Hunter led wire-to-wire, defeating second-place Megan Hightower (Franklin County) and third-place Paxton Kirby of Rockmart.

Avery Hussion came in 24th with a time of 24:30; Averie Tanner was 27th at 24:30; Kate Barrett was 29th at 24:58; senior Lydia Wagner placed 30th at 24:59.

Senior Katie Payne was 33rd at 25:32 and Macy Payne ended in 38th place at 25:59.

Union County will race at 11 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. on



Sophomore Oliver Hillman crosses the finish line ninth at Saturday's sectional meet, leading Union County to a fifth-place overall finish and a spot in this weekend's State Championships. Photo/Todd Forrest

Saturday, Nov. 9 in Carrollton. Hunter enters as one of the favorites in Class AA alongside freshman Olivia DiQuattro of Columbus High, who logged an 18:42 in her sectional race, and Savannah Arts Academy's Frances Tedder, who turned in a 19:45 over the weekend. No other Class AA runner broke 20 minutes in their respective

sectional meet.

However, the hilly Carrollton course could benefit Hunter and the other north Georgia runners when they face their south Georgia counterparts this weekend.

On the boys' side, Crisp County dominated the field in the South Georgia sectional race, taking three of the top four

spots with all three recording times under 17:30. In all, Crisp County had four runners in the top 10 and five among the top 16.

Savannah Arts Academy placed second with four runners in the top 17. Laney's Evan Osias was first individually at 16:57.

Football: NCC offense too much for Union County on Senior Night

Panthers await postseason opponent ahead of next week's Class AA first round

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The Panthers (4-6, 4-4) had no answer for sophomore quarterback Teddy Jarrard and the North Cobb Christian offense in a 44-24 Senior Night loss on Thursday, Oct. 31.

Now, Union County awaits its first-round playoff destination, which will be determined Saturday when the brackets are finalized.

The Panthers, who are currently 28th, expect to qualify as one of the top 32 teams in Class AA. However, with a handful of makeup games being played across the state on Friday, Union head coach Michael Perry will have to wait a week to see how the final standings shake out.

"Who knows? I've seen scenarios that have us playing Hapeville, Appling County or Sumter County," he said. "There are a few games this week and how much that will change the rankings at this point, I really don't know. So we have nothing to go on during practice this week."

As for last week's loss, Jarrard, a 4-star QB, connected on three of his five TD passes in the first quarter, putting the Panthers in an early 20-3 hole.

"He's the best quarterback we've faced since Gunnar Stockton (Rabun County)," Perry said. "And [Jarrard is] just a sophomore and will only



Connor Schuknecht breaks a tackle in the third quarter vs. NCC. The senior RB rushed for 134 yards and 2 TDs to give him 1,081 yards and 10 scores on the year. Photo/Todd Forrest

get better." However, Union County remained competitive behind senior running back Connor Schuknecht's 134 yards and two scores on the ground, giving him 1,081 yards and 10 TDs on the year.

"I'm really proud of our

offense, especially our offensive line," Perry said. "We were able to put together some drives against a very good team. I'm excited for Connor going over 1,000 yards. That's a testament to him and how good he is."

After the Panthers cut the margin to 20-10 in the second, North Cobb built a 30-10 halftime edge. But Schuknecht's score capped off the opening drive of the third quarter, narrowing the gap to 30-17.

Schuknecht added a fourth-quarter TD for a 37-24 deficit, but Jarrard answered with an 80-yard scoring strike in the final minutes to put the game out of reach.

Two early touchdown passes by Jarrard had the home team in a 13-0 hole before sophomore kicker Grant Smith connected on a 39-yard field goal from the right hash, putting Union on the board.

"Grant and our kicking team have vastly improved over the course of the year," Perry said. "At the beginning of the season, I would have never attempted a field goal, even if my life depended on it. But Grant has worked hard and I'm glad I have two more years with him."

Down 20-3 later in the half, the Panthers sliced the margin in half when freshman Kamden Kendrick put the finishing touches on a 90-yard scoring drive by calling his own number from the 1-yard line.

The Eagles responded with a 31-yard touchdown run, followed by a 34-yard field goal, resulting in a 30-10 lead with less than 3 minutes remaining in the second quarter.

The third quarter opened with a methodical 84-yard Union scoring drive, resulting in a 2-yard touchdown run by Schuknecht, but North Cobb's ensuing drive covered 55 yards and increased its lead to 37-17 with under 3 minutes to play in

the quarter.

Both squads traded punts before Union took over with less than 9 minutes remaining and drove 65 yards, narrowing the margin to 37-24 when Schuknecht found paydirt from 5 yards out.

As the clock ticked under 3 minutes, the Panthers' defense forced North Cobb Christian into a third-and-medium situation, but Jarrard worked his magic one last time, hitting a streaking receiver across the middle for 80 yards and a 44-24 final.

Sophomore Chetley Cox led the way with 6 catches for 48 yards, leading a shorthanded receiver group playing without injured junior Tyler Parker.

"I'm really proud of Chetley," Perry said. "He had some big time catches for us off some RPOs and on crossing routes."

Maddox Young had four grabs for 36 yards, he also rushed three times for 18 yards. Schuknecht caught four passes for 25 yards; freshman Jax Dillinger had two receptions for 27 yards; freshman Mikey Davis hauled in two passes for 13 yards; junior Dominick Tarbert had a 13-yard grab and senior Andrew Engle added an 8-yard reception.

Kendrick finished the game 20 for 29 with 170 yards through the air to go with one rushing score.

Sophomore Bentley Rich had one carry before leaving the game with a foot injury.

Defensively, Union suffered a devastating loss when senior LB Ethan Lester suffered a likely season-ending shoulder injury early in the contest.

No defensive stats were available for last week's game.

Union County honored its seniors ahead of last week's game -- the first group to play all four years under Coach



Sophomore Grant Smith drills a 37-yard field goal, giving the Union kicker field goals in consecutive games. Photo/Todd Forrest

Perry.

"I can't say enough about these guys," he said. "Braden Plott, Kaden Combs, Ethan Lester, Beau Webster, Connor Schuknecht, Gunnar Ingram, Antonio Solorio, Darin Patterson, Andrew Engle, Maddox Young and everyone, I'm thankful for all of them."

"They held this team together. They were the glue. I don't think we would have won a game without their contributions. When you look at what we lost from last year, then losing our starting quarterback before the first game, I'm really proud of these guys for holding everything together."

The Union County seniors are likely to get at least one more game, as for the

opponent, the Panthers are currently 23rd among public schools (28th overall) in Class AA. Five teams ahead of Union have games this week, along with two bubble teams in their rearview mirror.

One of the teams ahead of Union with a game to play is Appling County, which is where the Panthers would play if the playoffs started this week.

Other potential first-round destinations include Hapeville, Burke County, Pierce County and Carver-Atlanta.

There's still an outside chance Union County could travel to Ringgold, Stephens County, Westside-Macon or elsewhere, should a couple top-15 teams lose on Friday.

Three UCRD football teams secure playoff spot ahead of finale



Although eliminated from postseason contention, the UCRD 3rd grade picked up a 20-7 win over Chestatee on Saturday. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union's 2nd grade defense did a number on Chestatee in a 14-0 shutout, setting up a showdown at Dawson on Saturday. Photo/Todd Forrest

The playoff picture is in focus for three recreation department football teams entering the regular season's final week.

The 6th grade, who suffered a 16-12 loss to Chestatee, still controls its own destiny for the top-seed and needs only a win at Dawson this weekend.

Meanwhile, the 2nd and 4th grade teams defeated Chestatee last weekend and can seize the No. 2 seed with wins at Dawson County.

The 3rd grade team blanked Chestatee 14-0 and the 5th graders lost 36-6. The 4th grade squad had a bye.