

Sports

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Union solves No. 3 Providence with a 'Houston' solution

Houston Henry's 50-foot buzzer-beater lifts Union into first-place tie in 8-AA

By Todd Forrest
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Houston Henry's half-court buzzer-beater halted No. 3 Providence Christian's 12-game winning streak and moved Union County into a first-place tie in 8-AA following Friday's thriller in Blairsville.

Earlier in the week, the Panthers visited Roswell's Fellowship Christian and left with a 68-43 win, setting up last Friday's first-place showdown with a red-hot Providence squad, 17 days removed from a 74-38 rout of Union County in Lilburn.

Panthers 81, No. 3 Providence 78 - With Union County needing to go the length of the court in 4.9 seconds, Henry took the inbound pass and dribbled right up the sideline, spinning past a defender just shy of mid-court before letting it fly.

What happened next is a moment Panther Nation will never forget.

"The plan was to get it across halfcourt, then pass ahead [for a shot], but I thought the clock was way lower than what it was so I just let it go," Henry said after the game. "I thought it was an airball as soon as it left my hand. It took me a second after it went in [to realize what happened]."

According to Union head coach Corey Garrett, "It was [Henry's] game to finish as he saw fit. We run fast-break drills everyday in practice and it was basically that same drill we were trying to recreate. [Henry] thought he was lower on time than he was, and when he spun, it opened a clear look at the rim."

Henry's heroics came courtesy of a Providence offensive foul when sophomore Jude Ellis drew a charge on the heels of a Union County turnover with 8 seconds remaining.

Ellis also came up big on the offensive end, delivering a team-high 25 points and four assists, scoring five straight to tie the game after Union County fell behind 78-73 with 1:42 remaining. With his team desperately needing a bucket, Ellis knocked down a trey from the left wing, moving Union within a deuce at the 1:22 mark.

Henry gathered a miss on the other end, setting up Ellis' game-tying pull-up jumper from the corner with 48 seconds left. "I swung the ball to Maddox [Young], and they set me a double pick, so I flared to the back corner," Ellis said regarding his final basket. "The idea was for me to get an open shot or play-make out of that situation. I caught the ball and [Providence's] No. 0 is a long defender, so I just went to the open spot and elevated and it worked out."

Tied at 78-78, freshman Cade Dockrey forced Providence into a tough shot with 25 seconds remaining, setting up a dramatic final 17 seconds.

"I thought [Providence] would try to get it inside, but Cade put some good defense on No. 14, and after that, I knew we had a chance," Henry said. The Panthers took a timeout in the frontcourt with 17 seconds left to draw up a potential game-winner. However, Union's post-entry pass bounced out of bounds when senior Eli Underwood lost his footing.

With 8 seconds remaining, Providence pushed the ball up the floor to junior Samuel Thacker, and the game's leading scorer (28 points) immediately attacked the paint, but Ellis was waiting to draw the offensive



Sophomore Houston Henry connects from beyond half-court to hand Providence its first region loss. Photo/Todd Forrest

foul with 4.9 seconds left.

"The original plan was for me to take No. 1 and for Houston to take No. 2 (Thacker), but when [Thacker] got loose in the open, I ran to the middle and set my feet," Ellis said. "Sometimes it works, but as soon as [Thacker] left his feet, I knew it would be a charge."

Underwood scored 21 points on 8-of-9 shooting, despite foul trouble limiting him to just 17 minutes. Henry delivered another all-around performance with 15 points, nine assists and seven boards.

The Panthers fell into an early 16-6 hole and trailed 19-11 after one quarter. Union stormed back, knotting the score at 19-19 when Underwood brought the crowd to its feet with a transition 3-pointer at 5:52 before halftime. Dockrey and Ellis helped the Panthers keep pace at 24-24 before Providence built a 28-24 edge at the 3:28 mark.

Sophomores Hayden Hughes and Maddox Young narrowed the gap to 30-29, but the visitors closed the half on a 10-2 run, highlighted by a one-handed slam at the 90-second mark.

Down 40-31 entering the third and 43-33 moments later, Ellis and Underwood kept Union County in contention, but Underwood picked up his third foul with 6:12 remaining in the period and the Panthers trailing 43-36.

With the home team down 47-40 later in the frame, Henry scored Union's next six points courtesy of a trey and a traditional 3-point play off a steal. Despite cutting the deficit to 47-46, the Panthers couldn't push ahead during the third, needing another triple by Henry to remain within 56-53 at the quarter's end.

Underwood went to work down low with consecutive baskets to begin the fourth, slicing the deficit to 58-57. Dockrey's dribble drive kept the Panthers within a point until Henry evened the game at 6:04 via a 3-pointer.

Underwood hit two free throws to tie the game at 64-64, then scored inside to keep pace at 66-66 with 4:45 on the clock. Dockrey's left-handed scoop layup tied things up at 68-68 until

Hughes' corner-trey provided Union its first lead of the night at 71-70.

Providence answered with a go-ahead jumper but Ellis would not be denied on the other end, attacking the basket for a 73-72 lead at 3:24.

The next six points went to Providence, beginning with a free throw that tied the game at 73. Then a Thacker jumper made it 75-73 near the 2:40 mark but Ellis took the first of two fourth-quarter charges, denying a Storm fast break and keeping the Panthers within striking distance.

Down 78-73 following a Providence trey, Ellis knocked down back-to-back jumpers before taking another charge to set the stage for Henry.

Hughes finished with 8 points and seven boards on 2 of 5 from downtown. Young had 6 points and two assists; Dockrey added 6 points and an assist.

"I can't say enough about how awesome our crowd was [vs. Providence]," Garrett said. "We need them - the student section, the parents and just the fans in general. It was an awesome atmosphere and I would love it if we could keep that up. Our guys love playing in front of big crowds, and even Providence was like, 'wow, that atmosphere was something else.'"

"I want everyone to know that [the crowd] didn't go unnoticed and we want them to keep coming back, for sure."

Game stats: Union -- 30 for 58 (52%) shooting; 10 for 26 (39%) from three and 7 of 10 (70%) at the line; 24 rebounds (8 offensive); 10 second-chance points; 32 points in the paint; 12 turnovers; 11 points off turnovers. PCA -- 29 for 58 (50%); 6 of 19 (32%) from three and 7 of 11 (64%) at the line; 30 rebounds (11 offensive); 13 second-chance points; 38 points in the paint; 13 turnovers; 15 points off turnovers.

Ellis discussed his team's turnaround following a 1-4 start that saw Union approach rock-bottom in a 34-29 loss to rival Towns County.

"I think [the team's] turning point came when everyone started to find, not necessarily their own individual game, but



Houston Henry and his teammates celebrate the biggest upset in the 20-year history of the UCHS gymnasium. No. 3 Providence is the highest-ranked boys' opponent to fall in the current gym. Photo/Todd Forrest

their confidence," he said. "For me, it came at Fannin (Dec. 2). I started [the year] something like 0 for 20 from three, but after I hit my first one at Fannin, it just got easier from there."

"For Houston, he came back after missing the first game, then struggled for a few games, but he had [16 vs. Murphy and 20 vs. Fannin]. After that, he had more confidence in his shot, and we need him to hit some shots."

"For Hayden, it has to be at Athens Academy when he had five or six 3s. Ever since that night, he's had confidence in what he does. Maddox does everything and he's found his role. He's rebounding, he's defending, he's scoring and doing everything that needs to be done."

"Eli is our senior leader and is consistent in practice and games -- it's just a matter of us getting him the ball. And when we do, he puts up the numbers. And that usually leads to good outcomes. For Cade, it's a matter of gaining experience because he's a very good player and getting better. Overall, everything feels different [since the start of the year]."

Thacker's 28 points came via a blistering-hot 12 of 16 from the floor and 2 of 4 from deep with four assists. Senior Devin McClain (No. 14) had 18 points and nine rebounds on 3 of 4 from long distance. Senior Kamryn Carryl (No. 0) scored 12 points.

The Panthers visited North Hall on Monday night in a non-region makeup game from earlier this month. Region 8-AA action resumes on Wednesday, Jan. 25 when Union County (13-6, 4-1) hosts East Jackson. The Panthers welcome 8-AA's Athens Academy on Friday night, looking to keep pace with Providence (17-3, 5-1) atop the standings.

In addition, the win over Providence opens the door for third-place Banks County (14-7, 4-2) to get back into the 8-AA title picture, just one game back of first.

"We are tied for first [in 8-AA] now; we have a target on us, so we have to keep getting better each game before the region tournament," Henry said.

Ellis, when asked how Union continues its upward trajectory coming off the highest of highs vs. Providence, said, "you'll never forget a win like that, so I am a little worried it might go to our heads. But we just need to look at the things we did right, then look at the things we did wrong and get back into the gym and try to improve on them. That's really all you can do."

Asked the same question, Garrett added there is no magic formula for getting a team to

peak at the right time.

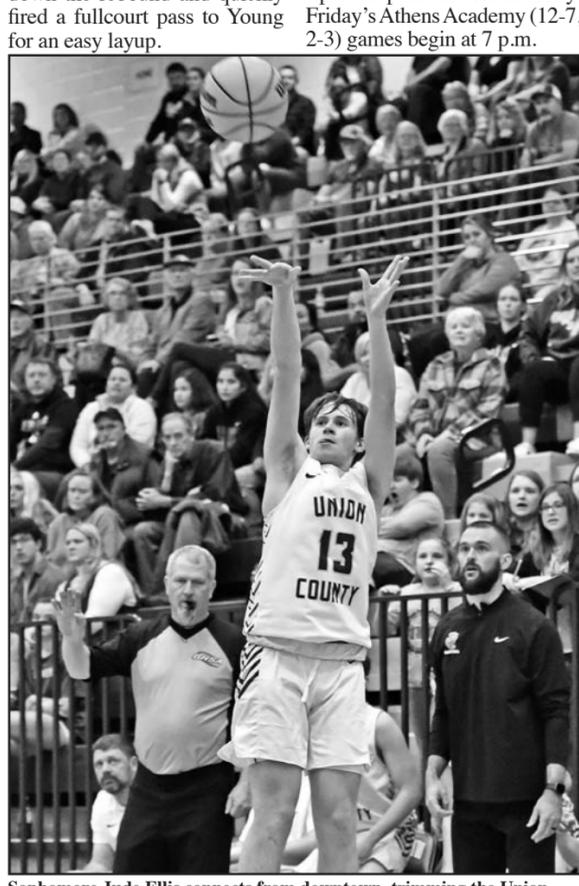
"I wish there was something special I could say," he said. "But what I think we can take from this is: We've been trying to ratchet it up in practice, and I've been really hard on the guys as far as accountability goes. We set a line every single day, and the goal is to beat it the next day. I think this win proves that it's starting to pay off."

Panthers 68, Fellowship Christian 45 - Union County outscored the Paladins 22-0 in the second quarter after trailing 14-13 to begin the frame.

Ellis scored the Panthers' first five points, spotting them a 5-2 advantage. An Underwood putback, a Young 3-pointer along with a Henry and-one opened up a 13-8 lead near the two-minute mark before Fellowship rattled off six straight.

Underwood sparked the 22-0 onslaught with a 3-point play, then Dockrey's floater provided Union with an 18-14 cushion with 5:47 left in the second. Henry drew a foul from behind the arc a minute later, resulting in three free throws and a 21-14 score.

After Underwood made it 23-14, the Paladins forgot about Hughes in the corner and he made them pay with a triple. Ellis drilled a turnaround jumper from the elbow, and following a Fellowship miss, Henry pulled down the rebound and quickly fired a fullcourt pass to Young for an easy layup.



Sophomore Jude Ellis connects from downtown, trimming the Union deficit to 78-76 with 80 seconds remaining. Photo/Todd Forrest

Later in the period, Henry drove the baseline and hit Underwood with a wrap-around pass in the paint for 2 points. Ellis capped off the first-half scoring with a finger-roll in the lane off a drive from the high-post, opening up a 34-14 margin.

Hughes started the third with a corner-3 off an Ellis kick out, then Henry attacked off the dribble for a 25-point advantage. A Fellowship 3 ended a 27-0 Union County run at the 6:50 mark of the quarter, but the Panthers answered with two Ellis free throws before Underwood put his defender in a washing machine, juking him with a ball fake right and a spin move left for two.

Union County eventually built a 53-21 third-quarter advantage, but Fellowship hit from downtown at the 1-minute mark. The Panthers took a 53-25 lead into the fourth and cruised to their 12th win of the year.

Ellis led the way with 16 points; Underwood had 13 and Henry added 10. Young and Hughes scored nine; Dockrey had five; Kaden Combs, Anderson Cruse and Van Marevka chipped in 2 points each. Game stats were unavailable.

With its two victories last week, Union has topped last season's win total of 12.

Up next: Union and East Jackson (7-13, 1-4) varsity will tip at 6 p.m. on Wednesday. Friday's Athens Academy (12-7, 2-3) games begin at 7 p.m.

Lady Panthers getting healthy at right time, win two-in-a-row

By Todd Forrest
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The Lady Panthers welcomed senior Ivie Chapman and junior Lara Turner back from injury last week, picking up one-sided wins over Fellowship Christian and Providence Christian.

"These two games were tough games because they aren't top-tier [opponents], but they are great for working on things and getting some of our injured players back in," Union County head coach Brad Cochran said. "I held Lara back against Fellowship because I didn't want to risk it, but against Providence, she felt good so I let her go. We're glad to have her back."

Despite its 0-2 start in Region 8-AA, the Lady Panthers remain squarely in the hunt for the No. 2 seed in next month's region tournament, needing wins over East Jackson and Athens Academy this week.

Lady Panthers 59, Providence 12 - In a non-region contest (Providence does not play a full region schedule) on Friday night, Union County (11-8, 2-2) jumped out to an 11-1 lead and never looked back.

Juniors Kamryn Mull and Turner scored 10 points each; sophomore Ariel McCarter added eight.

"I saw some great things tonight and everyone got to play and have fun," Cochran said.

Mull opened the game with a triple, followed by five-straight Union points from McCarter. Senior Corinne Hill knocked down a trey for an 11-1 lead at the 3:13 mark, but a Providence 3-pointer cut the lead to 11-4.

During the final 21 sec-



The return of junior Lara Turner (L) and senior Ivie Chapman (R) were a welcome addition to a Lady Panthers squad that had previously dropped

two of three to begin January and were 0-2 in 8-AA. Photos/Todd Forrest
Chapman scored down low and Turner finished a fast break after blocking a shot on the other end.

Up 40-10, Turner scored two more times to finish the quarter along with buckets from Robertson and sophomore Aubrie Akins.

Freshman Lola Hunter started the fourth with an and-one, and sophomore Sloane Dyer connected from 3-point range. Robertson hit a free throw and Hope Taylor tacked on a pair of low-post buckets for a 59-10 score.

Providence's only basket of the fourth came with 44 seconds left, ending a scoring drought of almost 14 minutes.



The return of junior Lara Turner (L) and senior Ivie Chapman (R) were a welcome addition to a Lady Panthers squad that had previously dropped

Hill ended the game with 7 points; Robertson had six and Taylor scored four. Hunter and Dyer scored three apiece; Adams, Akins, Chapman and Warren scored 2 points each.

No game stats were available for Friday's contest.

Lady Panthers 60, Fellowship Christian 40 - McCarter finished her night with 19 points, six rebounds and six steals as Union County broke things open with a 17-2 second frame.

"We came into this game with a different mindset than Providence because [Fellowship is playing a region schedule]," Cochran said. "We started off a little cold, but we

third and early stages of the fourth before closing the contest on an 8-0 run.

Mull hit two treys during the run -- the first coming at the 4:30 mark.

Mull poured in a career-high 16 points on 4-of-6 shooting from long range to go with five boards and two steals. Brown also recorded a career-best 12 points with 11 boards, four assists and two steals.

Hill dished out a game-high seven assists and grabbed five rebounds while scoring seven. Adams chipped in 4 points and Warren added two.

Game stats: Union - 23-for-53 (43%) shooting; 8 for 19 (42%) from three and 6 of 11 (55%) from the line; 37 rebounds (13 offensive); 14 second-chance points; 24 points in the paint; 22 turnovers; 16 points off turnovers. Fellowship -- 16-for-51 (31%) shooting; 3 of 20 (15%) from three and 5 of 6 (83%) at the line; 30 rebounds (11 offensive); 9 second-chance points; 14 points in the paint; 24 turnovers; 13 points off turnovers.

Up next: Union County visited North Hall on Monday in a non-region makeup contest. The Lady Panthers resume region play Wednesday vs. East Jackson. Union hosts Athens Academy on Friday.

"Those are two must-win region games if we want to try and take the second seed back from Athens Academy," Cochran said. "Both teams have to come up here and we're going to practice and be ready. Other than that, our girls need to come to play and grind it out and compete as best we can."

Wednesday's varsity games vs. East Jackson (8-12, 1-3) tip off at 6 p.m. Union County and Athens Academy (15-3, 3-1) will square off Friday at 7 p.m.

Basketball: 8th grade boys finish 13-0 with title-game victory over Fannin

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Jasper - The 8th grade Panthers overcame late foul trouble to hold off a furious Fannin County rally during the late stages of last week's 57-55 victory.

Jaxon Totherow poured in a team-high 16 points before picking up his fifth foul. Ethan Hogsted hit two of his three treys in the second half to finish with 13.

The Panthers took a 45-37 lead into the final frame, where Hayden Price drilled a pair of 3s to finish the game with 11 points and three triples.

Totherow scored 8 points in the first period as five different Panthers cracked the scoring column and spotted Union a 20-9 advantage.

Ryland Chambers and Tennon Collins got in on the second-quarter scoring with Charlie Wilson hitting from downtown. However, the Panthers were limited to just 9 points in the frame and Fannin narrowed the gap to 28-20 at the break.

Hogsted scored 8 of his



Alongside the cheer squad, the Union County Middle School's 8th grade boys' basketball team celebrates a perfect season following their 57-55 victory over Fannin County in last Thursday's league championship in Jasper. Photo/submitted

13 points in the third to maintain Union's 8-point edge heading to the fourth. Chambers finished with

6 points and Easton Shumaker added four. Wilson's day ended with 3 points and Collins had two.

Chetley Cox fouled out with 2 points.

Other UCMS team members include Karter Con-

ley, Brandon Lynch, Bryson Brooks, Isaac Miliam and Jacob Rodriguez.

The North Georgia News will feature a full-length season recap interview with UCMS head coach Gabe Miller in an upcoming edition.

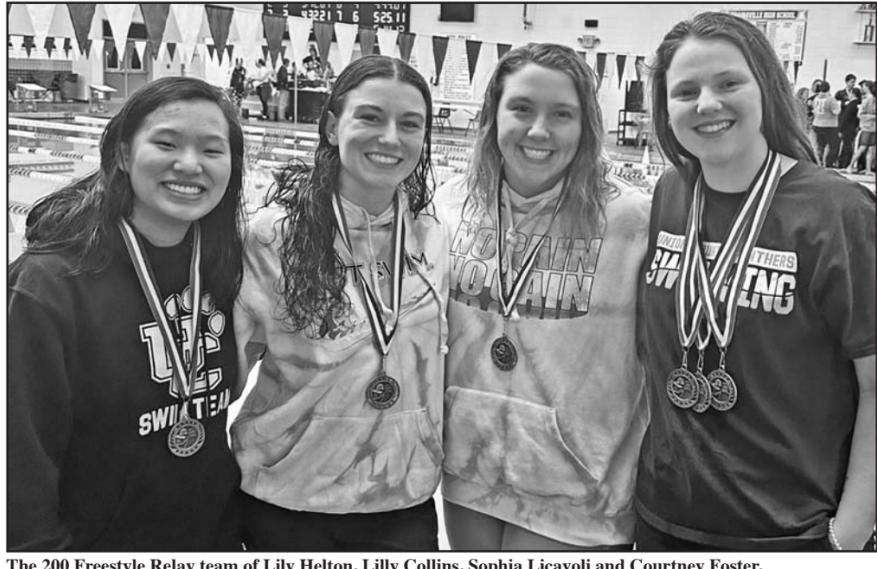
UCHS swimmers vying for State; record five top-3 finishes at Adairsville

UCHS SWIM TEAM

MEET FINALS

PAW POWER MEET - ADAIRSVILLE, GA
JANUARY 21, 2023

<p>200 MEDLEY RELAY Girls A: Courtney Foster, Sophia Licavoli, Lily Helton, and Lilly Collins 6th place</p> <p>50 FREESTYLE Nicholas Nushtayev: 3rd place Courtney Foster: 13th place</p> <p>100 FREESTYLE Lily Helton: 2nd place Nicholas Nushtayev: 3rd place Lilly Collins: 11th place</p>	<p>200 FREESTYLE RELAY Girls A: Lily Helton, Lilly Collins, Sophia Licavoli, and Courtney Foster 2nd place</p> <p>100 BACKSTROKE Courtney Foster: 7th place Sophia Licavoli: 12th place</p> <p>100 BREASTSTROKE Lily Helton: 2nd place Eli Gwynn: 6th place</p>
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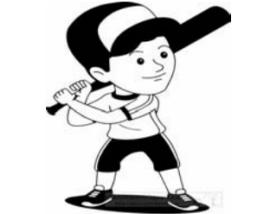


The 200 Freestyle Relay team of Lily Helton, Lilly Collins, Sophia Licavoli and Courtney Foster.



Nicholas Nushtayev

Union County Rec. Baseball, Softball, T-ball Registration



Baseball, softball, and T-ball registration opens January 4th, 2023 at the Union County Recreation Department for boys and girls ages 5-12, and boys to age 14. Age you are on September 1st 2023 is the age group you play in.

Fee is \$65 for 5-8 year-olds. Fee is \$80 for 9-14 year-olds.

You must register your child by Monday, February 8th. You may register online at unioncountyga.gov or in person at the Union County Sports Center located at 519 Industrial Blvd. Please call 706-439-6074 with any questions.

We are always in need of volunteer coaches. If you are interested, please come into the Union County Sports Center to complete an application. N/Jan18-Feb1,23/CA