

Panthers rout Putnam in 8-AA Consolation Game, fall in first round of State

Senior Sawyer Drake surpasses 1,000 career points with 22 vs Putnam County

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The Union County Panthers saw their season come to a close last weekend with a 63-50 loss at Douglass in the first round of the Class AA State Tournament.

The loss came on the heels of a region tournament blowout victory over Putnam County -- Union's third win of the season over the War Eagles.

Panthers 69, Putnam County 49 - The Union County men finished third in Region 8-AA with a 69-49 win over Putnam County in the tournament's consolation game on Monday, Feb. 10.

Senior Sawyer Drake finished with 22 points, including his 1,000th career point, coming on two fourth-quarter free throws that gave his team a commanding 53-32 lead.

Bouncing back from a disappointing Region semifinal loss to Social Circle, the Panthers left no doubt in the battle for third place, jumping out to a 12-0 lead and eventually cruising to a 20-point victory.

Although, it wasn't without its fair share of bumps in the road as Putnam closed the first with a 14-5 run to pull within three at 17-14.

The second got underway with a trey from sophomore Landon Kight and two Sawyer Brey free throws for a 22-15 advantage. Leading 23-20, Union County finally created a little breathing room with a 9-0 run and a 32-20 lead.

The run was highlighted by a Drake and-one, coming off a one-handed slam to give the Panthers a 27-20 lead. After Kight hit 1-of-2 to spark the run, Logan Helcher was fouled on a 3-point try and hit all of his free



Senior Sawyer Drake with a slam vs Putnam County. Photo/Todd Forrest

throws for a 30-20 advantage. The run was eventually capped by two more free throws from Helcher, putting Union County on top by a dozen.

The War Eagles out-scored the Panthers 7-4 over the final 110 seconds to pull within 36-27 at the break, despite 10 first-half points from Drake.

The first seven points of the third quarter went to Union as Drake, Brey, Pierson Allison and Cayden Rich all contributed to the 43-27 advantage.

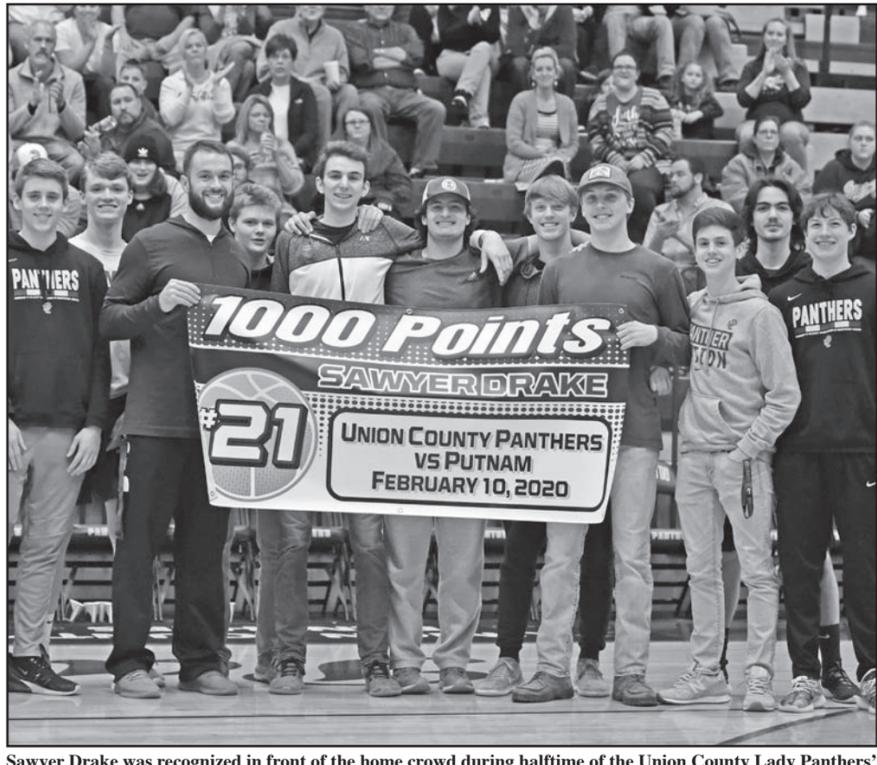
Still leading 44-32, the Panthers finally delivered the knockout blow in the form of a 14-2 run that began with seven-straight to close the third. Union opened the fourth with a 7-2 spurt, opening up a 58-34 lead at the six-minute mark.

Allison finished with 10 points, Kyle Morlock and Brey added 8 points each. Rich and Helcher scored five each, Kight added four and Kaston Hemphill had three. Bryson Larisey and Landon Cox scored 2 points apiece.

Drake finished 6-of-10 from the floor, including 3-of-5 from long distance. He was also a perfect 7-of-7 at the line to go with six steals, four rebounds and a block.

Brey led the Panthers with nine rebounds, Allison recorded a team-high four assists and chipped in three steals.

Putnam County struggled offensively, hitting just 34% (19-for-56) from the floor and 35% (7-for-20) at the line. Union County shot 42% (18-



Sawyer Drake was recognized in front of the home crowd during halftime of the Union County Lady Panthers' State playoff game last Thursday night. Photo/Todd Forrest

for-43) from the floor and 71% (27-for-38) at the line.

Panthers 50, Douglass 63 - One bad quarter brought Union County's season to a close on Saturday in a 63-50 loss to 6th ranked Douglass.

Trailing 14-10 after one, Douglass used a 26-3 avalanche in the second quarter to smother the Panthers under a 40-13 halftime deficit.

The Panthers refused to go away, battling back to within 10 points in the fourth quarter before eventually running out of time.

Allison scored a game-high 18 points, including three third-quarter treys to spark a 21-9 period.

Drake and Morlock added 11 points each.



Sawyer Drake reached 1,000 career points with two free throws during the fourth quarter vs Putnam County. Photo/Todd Forrest

Soccer: Union County splits home opener vs Gilmer

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Senior Kobi Robbins recorded a hat trick as the Union County Panthers (2-0) handed Gilmer a 4-1 defeat in Friday night's 2020 home opener.

Meanwhile, the Union County Lady Panthers were back on the pitch for the first time this year, falling 3-2 in a season-opening loss to Gilmer.

Lady Panthers 2, Gilmer 3 - Trailing 3-0 through 66 minutes of action, the Lady Panthers scored two late goals but the rally fell short as they were unable to convert the equalizer in the waning moments.

Senior Madison Ruff scored Union's first goal off a feed from fellow senior Desaray Patterson in the 67th minute.

Ruff quickly returned the favor by finding Patterson for the Lady Panthers second and final goal of the evening.

Senior goalkeeper Sadie Underwood overcame a difficult start to keep her team in the game, turning away the Lady Bobcats time after time during the second half.

Union County head coach Tim Hunter chalked this team's up-and-down play to inexperience as this year's squad features 12 freshman and sophomores.

"It's just the growing pains of a young team," Hunter said. "Sadie played exceptionally well in goal and made three huge saves in the second half. She had more saves but three of them were huge and we ended up with two chances to equalize at the end."

Gilmer got on the board first in the fourth minute. They struck again in the ninth minute before taking a 3-0 advantage in the 14th minute.

Panthers 4, Gilmer 1 -



Senior Kobi Robbins watches his second of three goals bounce into the net vs Gilmer. Photo/Todd Forrest

The defending State Runner-Up jumped out to a 2-0 halftime lead behind two early goals from Robbins.

Malachi Patrick made it a 3-nil game in the 45th minute and that's how it remained until Gilmer finally found an answer to Union's junior goalkeeper Aaron Helton in the 69th minute.

Any hopes of a Bobcat rally were quickly dashed when Robbins answered 52 seconds later to put the game away at 4-1.

Gilmer had two early chances but Helton collected a pair of saves in the opening minute. He turned the Bobcats away again in the 13th and 17th minutes, then a free kick sailed wide in the 23rd minute.

Junior Cort Olver added a pair of assists for Union County, coming on Robbins' first goal and the Patrick goal.

Sophomore Kyler Robbins assisted on Union's second



Senior Mattison Ruff (L) with the header vs Gilmer. Photo/Todd Forrest

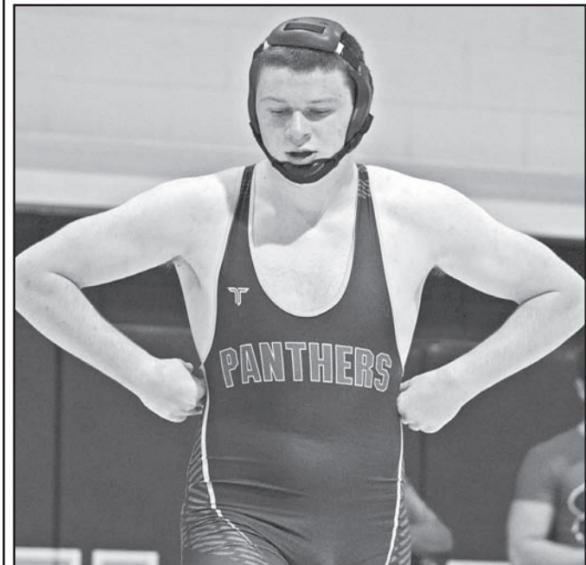
goal and junior Clayton Lester fed Kobi Robbins' third goal of the night.

The Union County guys will be in action on Tuesday when they host Riverside in

a boys only matchup at 5:30 p.m.

Both teams are in action on Friday when Union hosts Banks County to open region play at 5:30 and 7:30 p.m.

Two underclassmen compete at State Wrestling Championships



Sophomore Brady Guild (top) and junior Eli Smith-Foot (bottom) both traveled to Macon last weekend for the Class AA State Wrestling Championships. Guild (152 pounds) won his first match by pinfall before dropping his second bout. He won his third match by a 3-1 decision but fell 7-5 in the blood round. Smith-Foot (285) received a tough draw, dropping his first two matches to the eventual fifth and sixth place finishers in Class AA. Photos/Todd Forrest