

Sports

See the Sports Section at ngame.com

Soccer: Panthers too much for Rabun County, Monticello

Fourth-ranked Union visits No. 1 Putnam County on Wednesday in clash of region heavyweights

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

No. 4 Union County opened Region 8-AA with a pair of convincing wins over Rabun County and at Monticello, setting up Wednesday's showdown at top-ranked Putnam County (5-0).

After exploding for two goals in the first three minutes, the Panthers cruised to a 3-1 victory over Rabun County on Tuesday, March 3.

Kobi Robbins opened the scoring in the second minute off a feed from sophomore Kyler Robbins. A minute later, Kyler Robbins found the net via a Dalton Allen assist.

Kyler Robbins made it a 3-0 game with an unassisted goal in the 26th minute before Rabun got on the board moments later for a 3-1 game at the intermission.

Union County (4-1, 2-0) defenders MJ Delatte, Clayton Lester, Marcus Forrester, Jeffrey Williams and goalkeeper Aaron Helton, who finished with three saves, shut down the Wildcats in a defensive-minded second half, keeping the score at 3-1 until the final buzzer.

The Panthers traveled to Monticello on Friday and came away with a 4-0 victory while playing without the services of their leading goal scorer Kobi Robbins (ankle).

Once again, Union would jump ahead early and never look back. Nolan Bachman, starting in place of Kobi Robbins, began the scoring in the fourth minute off a Zach Jackson assist.

Five minutes later, Allen found Kyler Robbins for a 2-0 advantage. Still leading 2-nil in the 35th minute, Kyler Robbins pushed the margin to 3-0 with Cort Oliver providing the help.

Bachman tacked on another goal before the break, this time off an assist by David Van Pelt.

Helton finished with



L-R: Senior Kobi Robbins watches his shot sail past the off-balance Rabun County goalkeeper in the opening minutes of last Tuesday's win. Senior David Van Pelt avoids a collision with the Rabun goalkeeper following a first-half shot attempt. Photos/Todd Forrest



three saves and the reserves took the pitch for the Union County during the second half.

This past Monday, March 9, the Panthers hosted Banks County in a make-up game from earlier in the year. Kobi Robbins will likely sit out Monday's match the Leopards in hopes that he will be ready for Wednesday's contest at No. 1 Putnam County.

Union County will host Elbert County on Friday in another Region 8-AA contest. The girls are scheduled for 5:30 p.m. with the guys to follow.

News and Notes: Kobi Robbins currently has nine goals through four matches. Kyler Robbins has five goals and five assists in five matches

The rest of the squad has combined for four goals and 10 each with Oliver and Allen each accounting for three assists.



Junior Nolan Bachman scored two goals at Monticello in place of Kobi Robbins. Photo/Todd Forrest

Junior goalkeeper Aaron Helton has turned away 19 shots in five games. The Panthers are outscoring the opposition 18-7.



Sophomore Kyler Robbins puts the okie-doke on a Rabun County defender during last Tuesday night's 3-1 region-opening victory. Photo/Todd Forrest

Panthers thump No. 6 Commerce, resume Region play this week

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Commerce - Union County used a three-run first inning and the middle of the lineup pounded the sixth-ranked Tigers during a 7-3 victory on Tuesday, March 3.

The Panthers' 2-5 hitters combined for 10 hits and six RBIs while Damien Chitwood allowed two earned runs over four innings, leaving with a 5-2 lead in the fifth.

Isaak Mullinack and Cayden Rich finished off the Tigers as Mullinack surrendered one hit over two innings and Rich gave up one unearned run in the seventh. Batting out of the 2-spot, Mullinack turned in a 4-for-4 performance, scoring three times and driving in a run with an opposite-field single in the sixth.

Carter Wright scored twice while going 2-for-3 with a double and 3 RBIs. Rich and Chitwood each went 2-for-4 with Chitwood driving in two and scoring a run.

Union County opened with four in the first, kickstarted by a John Mancuso walk and a Mullinack single. After Wright put the Panthers on the board with an opposite-field single, Rich followed with a base hit of his own.

With two aboard, Chitwood made it 2-0 with a line-drive single to left field. Alec Youngblood kept things going with an infield single to spot Union a 3-0 advantage midway through the first.

Commerce answered with two in the bottom half of the inning, using a leadoff double, a single, an error and a sacrifice fly to pull within a run. Chitwood would induce a pop fly and an inning-ending ground ball to escape without further damage.

The Panthers extended the lead to 5-2 in the second with some timely hitting, beginning with a two-out single by Mullinack and an RBI double from Wright. Rich beat out a grounder to short, putting



Isaak Mullinack recorded the first four-hit game of his varsity career at Commerce. The 4-for-4 outing was Mullinack's 10th multi-hit performance in his last 29 games. Photo/Todd Forrest

runners at the corners for Chitwood, who scored Wright with another infield single to open up a three-run margin.

In the Tigers' half of the second, Chitwood got out of trouble following a leadoff single and a two-out walk. He pitched around a leadoff single in the third and a two-out walk in the fourth to preserve the 5-2 lead.

After going 1-2-3 in the top of the third, Union County failed to take advantage of Mullinack's single to begin the fourth and Youngblood's one-out walk in the fifth.

With Mullinack on the hill in the bottom of the fifth, the Panthers' defense erased a leadoff walk when Matthew Kelley gunned down a baserunner at first, who wandered too far off the bag following a flyout to center.

Union County would tack on two more in the sixth when Mancuso walked and scored on a base hit by Mullinack. Later, Mullinack made

it a 7-2 game on a sacrifice fly off the bat of Wright.

After Mullinack got out of a two-on, two-out jam in the sixth, Rich took over in the seventh and nailed down the win despite two walks and a hit batter to begin the frame.

Commerce cut the deficit to 7-3 on a passed ball, then loaded the bases on the third walk of the inning, but Rich fanned the next two hitters to strike out the side and preserve the Panthers' fourth win of the year.

Friday's Region 8-AA doubleheader vs Social Circle was postponed to this past Monday, March 9.

On Tuesday, Union County will host Gilmer at 5 p.m. before hitting the road for a twin bill at Monticello on Friday. Game one will get underway at 5 p.m.

On Monday, March 16, Union County will host Towns County in the first meeting since 2016 between the neighboring programs.



Senior Carter Wright increased his team-leading double total to four with a 2-for-3 day at Commerce. Photo/Todd Forrest



Damien Chitwood got the nod and worked 4 innings during a winning effort at Commerce. Photo/Todd Forrest