

Sports

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Goble's 4 TDs pace Panthers to third-straight win

By Todd Forrest
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Oakwood - Senior wide-out Jensen Goble found the endzone four times and the Union County defense limited West Hall to a season-low 129 yards in a 42-7 road blowout on Friday night.

Goble ended the night with 13 catches for 126 yards. It's believed his baker's dozen matches Blake Gowder's 15-year-old school record, stemming from a 13-reception, 220-yard outing at Fannin County in 2008.

Three of Goble's four touchdowns at West Hall (1-3) were courtesy of throws from Caiden Tanner, who also ran for a score during a 310-yard, four-touchdown performance through the air. Goble added another touchdown on the ground, taking a jet-sweep 8 yards for a 14-7 first-quarter lead.

Tanner, meanwhile, carved up the Spartans' defense, completing 26 of his 30 pass attempts -- both season highs -- while adding a 5-yard keeper to punctuate Union's 8-play, 80-yard opening drive.

"We have a bunch of guys that just want to work hard and all love each other," Goble said after the game. "We love coming to work every day and doing what we do."

West Hall needed only six plays to answer Union's first drive, using runs of 36 and 21 yards to begin the series. Four plays later, the Spartans punched it in from 6 yards to even the score at 7-7.

Tanner, who started the night by completing his first 15 passes, fired back by leading the offense on another 8-play scoring drive, this one covering 68 yards and sparking 35 unanswered points.

Union's second series commenced with consecutive gives to Braylen Rader for 9 and 2 yards. Two plays later, Tanner hit Cade Dockrey downfield on a diving completion at the West Hall 26. From there, a quick screen to Goble picked up 14, and on third-and-6 from the eight, Goble found room outside, slipping inside the right pylon via an 8-yard scoring run.

Up 14-7, the Panthers (4-1) set up shop at their own 41 following a quick three-and-out from the defense. Three straight handoffs, two to junior Connor Schuknecht, moved Union across midfield with a fresh



Senior receiver Jensen Goble finds the endzone for the first time on Friday night courtesy of an 8-yard first-quarter run. Goble finished with three touchdown receptions and one rushing score. Photo/Todd Forrest

set of downs. Moments later, a pair of second-down receptions by senior Ethan McBride had Union County knocking on the door of the red zone at the 21.

McBride's evening concluded with a career-high six catches and high praise from his coach.

"Ethan McBride is the unsung hero of that game," Union County head coach Michael Perry said. "He just kept moving the chains for us. I really want to brag on him cause he's such a good route runner. He's consistent and you can count on him to be where he needs to be and catch the football."

Tanner's third-and-4 scramble picked up five, and on first-and-goal, the Spartans lost track of Goble on a drag route, and the senior waltzed untouched into the endzone.

Union County made it 28-7 at the half when West Hall punted following one first down, and the Panthers took over at the 35 with 7:50 left in the second.

Union went to the ground for the bulk of its 13-play, 65-yard scoring drive, highlighted by Rader runs of 10 and 18 yards before the senior workhorse finished off the series with a 3-yard touchdown catch at the 3:15 mark.

After giving up a touchdown on West Hall's opening drive, the Panthers' defense refused to suffer the same fate in the second half. On the third play of the third quarter, Schuknecht applied pressure from the backside, forcing an off-balance throw that allowed senior Taylor Whitehead to jump the comeback route at the 18-yard line and return the interception 13 yards.

"If he would have just cut to the sideline, like he's supposed to, he would have scored," Perry said with a laugh. "But as good as the defense has been playing lately, it's surprising we haven't forced more turnovers."

The pick at West Hall

marked Union's first defensive turnover since Aug. 25 and the first interception since Whitehead at Fannin County on Aug. 17.

Starting at the Spartans' 5-yard line, the ensuing offensive series nearly went south when a third-down sack dropped the Panthers back to the nine. But Union County kept the offense on the field on fourth down, and Tanner fired a dart to his favorite target, Goble, in the back of the endzone.

After the game, Goble discussed the offensive improvements during his second season working with Tanner.

"I'm not going to lie, I've known Caiden for a while and we've just always kind of had [chemistry]," he said. "But compared to last year, I think there's more chemistry there, but we have to keep building on that relationship and getting better each week."

The game's final touchdown came on the heels of a

defensive three-and-out, and the Union County offense set up shop at the 27 with 7:01 left in the third.

A second-and-8 swing pass to Rader went for 12, then a second-and-7 play-action strike to McBride netted 19 more.

After a third-down off-sides penalty awarded Union a new set of downs, the offense converted another third down when Tanner bought some time with his legs before finding Goble at the first-down marker for 6 yards.

Senior tight end Tyler Grasty picked up 26 with a catch-and-run before getting dragged down inside the five. On third-and-goal, Tanner rolled right and connected with Goble for the receiver's third scoring catch and fourth touchdown of the night.

"Jensen came up big for us as always, and we're just happy to be 4-1 going into our bye weeks," said Perry, whose squad is off for two weeks ahead of

the Oct. 6 Homecoming game. "We're looking forward to getting some time off and healing some guys up. We have a lot of guys playing injured and it will be good to get them some rest."

Along with his 13 grabs, Goble's three touchdown catches put him in some elite company at UCHS, joining Jacob Rogers (2014), Sawyer Drake (2019) and Keyton Chitwood (2021) as the only receivers over the last dozen years to catch three touchdowns in a single game.

"I'm not going to lie, when it comes to Union County football, all we want right now is a region title," Goble said. "We want to win [region], not just for us, but for the community. There's nothing we want more than to win region for the people of Blairsville."

The Panthers took a 42-7 lead into the running-clock fourth, and for the third straight week, Union's defense held its opponent to a season-low total yardage output.

"Those guys are working hard and doing a great job, and [West Hall] definitely had the most athletic running back we've faced all year," Perry said. "We knew he would get loose on us, but after that first drive, we did a good job containing him and I'm just really proud of how we played."

Stats - Passing - Tanner 26-30, 310 yds, 4 TDs. **Rushing** - Rader 23 car, 89 yds; Tanner 8 car, 20 yds, TD; Schuknecht 4 car, 15 yds; Brandon Lynch 1 car, 9 yds; Goble 1 car, 8 yds, TD; Bentley Rich 3 car, 0 yds. **Receiving** - Goble 13 rec, 126 yds, 3 TDs; McBride 6 rec, 85 yds; Grasty 4 rec, 47 yds; Rader 3 rec, 22 yds, TD; Dockrey 1 rec, 30 yds.

Defense - Kooper Ashcraft 5 tkl, TFL; Schuknecht 5 tkl, QBH; David Heredia 4 tkl, sack, QBH; Lane Lance 4 tkl, QBH; Jonah Kluth 4 tkl, QBH; Seth Rutan 3 tkl, TFL; 2 QBH; Nolan Thompson 3 tkl, PBU; Dockrey 3 tkl; Ethan Lester 3 tkl; Carter Deal 2 tkl; Dusty Aaron 1 tkl; Braden Plott 1 tkl; Anthony Heredia 1 tkl; Whitehead INT, PBU. **Kicking** - McBride 6-6 PATs.

Up next: Union County is off on Sept. 22 and Sept. 29. The Panthers return to action on Oct. 6 vs. Banks County for Homecoming. The Union County junior varsity is in action on Thursday at home vs. Stephens County. Kickoff is at 5:30 p.m.



Lane Lance (69) greets fellow-senior Taylor Whitehead (15) following Whitehead's interception return early in the third quarter. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior wide receiver Ethan McBride (22) reeled in a career-best six passes on Friday night at West Hall. Photo/Todd Forrest

Softball: Lady Panthers no-hit East Jackson, surrender lead at Providence

By Todd Forrest
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Union County softball's back is officially against the wall after dropping to third place in Region 8-AA following a costly 2-1 loss at Providence Christian on Thursday.

The Lady Panthers (6-6, 1-2) recorded their first region win earlier in the week, 9-0 at East Jackson on Tuesday, Sept. 12. Union County begins round two of 8-AA action with a pivotal trip to first-place Banks County on Tuesday, Sept. 19.

Lady Panthers 1, Providence 2 - Freshman pitcher Izzy Anthros tossed a complete-game three-hitter but took another loss despite not allowing an earned run and registering nine punch outs.

The Union County offense mustered only five hits, two singles apiece from seniors Georgia Patton and Gracie Gladding and one by junior Lily Helton.

Anthros worked out of a first-inning jam, then pitched around a leadoff walk in the second, allowing Union to grab an early 1-0 edge in the third. The Lady Panthers' third started with a one-out single by Patton and an error off the bat of Anthros; Gladding loaded the bags with a base hit, and junior Sloane Dyer put Union out front via a four-pitch walk.

A strikeout and a pop-up limited the damage to the lone run, but Anthros stranded two in the Providence half of the frame.

Union left two aboard in the fourth when Helton singled and Mikala Souther walked to start the inning.

The Storm pushed ahead with two in the bottom half courtesy of a bloop single and two Union errors.

Neither team threatened until the seventh when senior Jewel Massey wore a 1-0 pitch to put the leadoff hitter aboard for a top-of-the-order that only mustered two pop-outs and a flyout.

With two region losses, Union finds itself in a must-win-out situation to repeat as 8-AA champs, beginning with a critical Tuesday trip to Banks County. A win over the



Senior centerfielder Katie Byers went 3-for-3 at East Jackson on Tuesday, Sept. 12. Photo/Todd Forrest

Leopards moves Union within a game of first place; a loss all but eliminates them from the top spot.

Lady Panthers 9, East Jackson 0 - Union bounced back from its 9-inning loss to Banks with a five-inning victory at the last-place Eagles.

Anthros fanned nine and didn't allow a hit over five scoreless, while the offense picked her up with two runs in the second, one in the third, two in the fourth and four in the fifth.

Senior Katie Byers went 3 for 3 with a double, 3 runs and an RBI. Massey plated three during a 1-for-2 day; Peyton Grisham knocked in a pair and finished 2 for 2.

Helton scored and drove in a run during a 2-for-3 performance. Brooklyn Brown and Dyer each scored and finished 1 for 2, with Dyer doubling and knocking in a run. Anthros added an RBI groundout and Gladding walked.

Byers' RBI single started the nine-run victory by scoring Dyer in the Union County

second. Grisham's two-out opposite field single made it 2-0 when Byers came around to score.

The Lady Panthers made it 3-0 in the third when Patton doubled and stole third, then came home on Anthros' ground out.

Three straight singles to start the fourth from Brown, Byers and Helton loaded the bases when Grisham was plunked on a 3-1 count. Massey bumped the lead to 5-0 on a sacrifice fly before an inning-ending double play.

Gladding walked to begin the fifth, and courtesy runner Delaney Mosey swiped second before coming around on Dyer's sacrifice fly. Later in the inning, Byers' two-out double led to another run thanks to Helton's RBI single. Grisham kept the inning alive with a base hit, and Massey made it 9-0 with a base knock up the middle.

Anthros tossed a 1-2-3 bottom half to finish one hit-by-pitch away from dealing five perfect frames.

XC: No. 2 Lady Panthers second at Gilmer; Hunter sets PR at UNG

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The Class AA No. 2-ranked Union County ladies placed second, and the ninth-ranked men finished third at Gilmer's North Georgia Championships on Tuesday, Sept. 12.

Sophomore Lola Hunter placed second overall with a time of 22 minutes, 6 seconds, coming in behind Dawson County's Hayden Hand (21:38). Meanwhile, senior Benton Gregory finished second in the men's race, clocking in at 18:49. Southeast Whitfield's Kevyn Chavez took home first at 18:28.

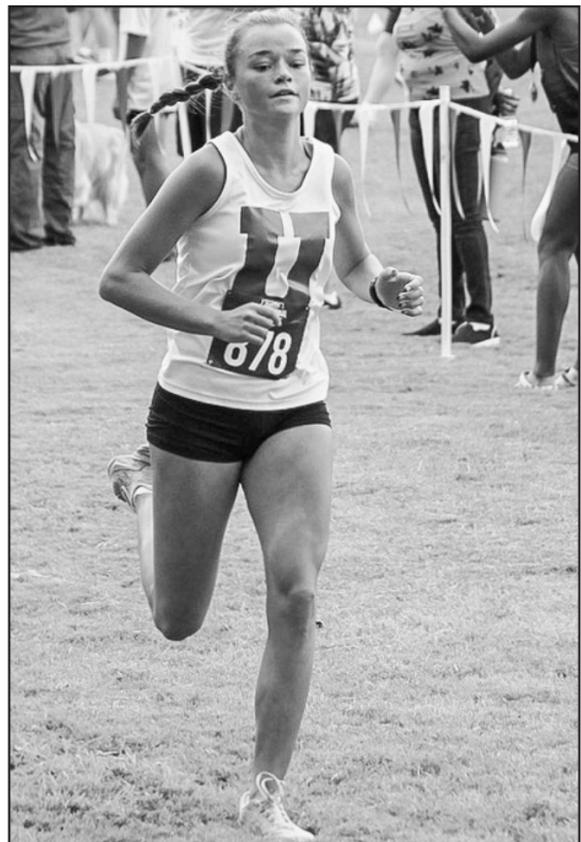
Over the weekend, Hunter placed third at Lumpkin County's North Georgia Invitational with a personal-best time of 19:43, leading Union to a seventh-place finish.

Hannah Kazmierzak came in 22nd at 22:33; Natalie Payne was 34th at 22:57; Katie Payne came in 68th with a time of 25:35 and Abby Barrett's 28:28 was good enough for 82nd.

The Union County men didn't participate in Saturday's meet.

At Gilmer, Ellie Adams placed fifth, crossing the line in 25:12. Kazmierzak finished one second back in sixth; Payne was ninth at 25:52; Noel Hyatt came in 12th at 26:34.

Lydia Wagner was 14th at 27:11, and Mackenzie Bourbeau placed 17th with a time of 27:24.



Lola Hunter races at the University of North Georgia XC course on Saturday, finishing with a personal-record time of 19:43. Photo courtesy of Mark Turner/White County News.

On the men's side, Zander Rotko was ninth at 20:06; Wes Seiler placed 10th with a time of 20:08 and Oliver Hillman was 13th at 20:22. Ty Hogged came in 15th at 20:56; Andrew Nushtayev was 21st at 21:06 and Anderson Clouse

finished 23rd, clocking in at 21:56.

Union County visits Stephens County for Tuesday's Reservation Run, and then the Panthers are off to Murphy, North Carolina's Bulldog Meet on Saturday, Sept. 23.

Volleyball: Union hosts Banks on Tuesday, look to return to .500 in 8-AA

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Union County (7-17) dropped to 1-2 in Region 8-AA with consecutive 2-0 road losses at Providence Christian and Fellowship Christian last week.

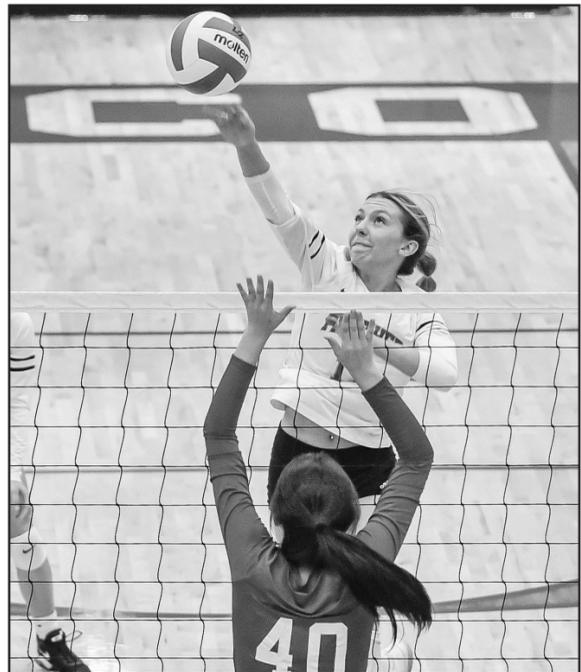
The week began with a 3-1 non-region loss at Andrews, North Carolina on Monday, Sept. 11. The Panthers fell 25-13 in the first two sets before taking the third 26-24. The Wildcats finished off Union with a 25-11 set-four victory.

In Tuesday's 8-AA matchup at Roswell's Fellowship Christian, the Panthers suffered two narrow losses, 25-20 and 26-24 in the 2-0 defeat.

During Thursday's rematch at Lilburn's Providence Christian, the Storm survived a tight opening set, hanging on 25-22, before pulling away 25-14 in the second.

In other action during Thursday's tri-match at Providence, Union suffered a 2-0 loss to Whitefield Academy (Mableton), falling 25-11 and 25-9.

The Panthers resume region play at home vs. Banks



Senior Claire Colwell attacks at the net. Photo/Todd Forrest

County on Tuesday. The Leopards are currently 19-5 overall and 1-1 in 8-AA following a 2-0 loss to East Jackson (13-9, 1-2).

Tuesday's Banks contest is a tri-match alongside Rabun Gap, with Union facing Banks at 5 p.m. and Rabun Gap at 7 p.m. The Panthers visit Gainesville High on Thursday in a 5 p.m. non-region meeting. Union travels to Banks County on Tuesday, Sept. 26 to face the Leopards and Athens Academy in a 6 and 7 p.m. region tri-match.

UCRD youth football officially underway at Pickens, UCMS sits at 3-2

The Union County Recreation Department youth football teams took three of five at Pickens County on a rainy Saturday in Jasper.

The Panthers' 6th grade team survived a 6-0 defensive battle. The 4th grade denied a

late 2-point conversion in a 14-12 victory, and the 3rd grade held on 18-12.

The 5th grade took a 30-6 loss despite trailing only 6-0 at the break. The 2nd graders fell 21-0.

The UCRD youth foot-

ball teams will be at home this Saturday.

Meanwhile, the middle school team is currently 3-2 following a 16-14 loss to Lumpkin County. The UCMS Panthers are 2-2 in league play and visit Pickens County this week.



Top: The Union County 6th graders take the field at Pickens County on Saturday, Sept. 16. Bottom: The 4th graders outlasted the Dragons and the wet conditions in a 14-12 thriller. Union County youth football's home opener is slated for Saturday, Sept. 23. Photos/Todd Forrest

Local Racing Report: Tri-County

By Blake Lynch
Racing Reporter
North Georgia News

Brasstown, NC - On Sept. 4, Tri-County hosted the Southern All Star Dirt Racing Series CT Barnett Memorial.

The next race is Friday, Sept. 22. Ray and the crew have been busy at the track since the last race. Over 70 truckloads of fresh red clay have been added. Turns 1 & 2 and the backstretch have been widened.

We are hoping this will make our last three events the best of the year. Please join us next Friday night for the Interstate Welding 602 LM Championship.

Now it's get to the winners from the Labor Day race.

Super Late Model: Jamie Oliver took home the win along with \$10,034.37. Coming

in second David Payne. Third was Payton Freeman. Fourth was Kenny Collins. Fifth place went to Kurt English.

Interstate Welding 602 Late Models: Dylan Beaver took home the win. Colton Berrong came in second. Third went to Jonathan Cope. Fourth place belonged to Johnny Gulizia. Bobby Elkins rounded out the top five.

602 Late Model B-Feature: Mark Ledford took home the win. Coming in second was Jerry Buice. Josh Wooten finished third.

Street Stocks: Roger Beaver took home the win. Alex Vance was second. Third place belonged to Troy Turner. Fourth place was Matt Whitener. Jacob Lynch rounded out the top five.

Open Wheel Modifieds: Cy Strickland was the winner.

Second was Brawley Stillwell. Matt Sandefur was third. Fourth was Brad Sosebee. Fifth went to Billy Payne.

Front Wheel Drive: Jim Exum took home the win. Second belonged to James Klauke. Third was Jason Coates. Bobby Raper was fourth. Shannon Jones rounded out the top five.

Crown Vic / Strictly Stock: Alex Vance in his second appearance of the night took home the win. Second was Millner. Third was Anderson. Fourth was A. Phillips. Fifth was M. Phillips. (I apologize that the track only had last names.)

Teague Faster Pastor Race: Coming in first was Jason Morgan. Coming second was Asa Murphy. Coming in third was Chris Rumpf. Fourth was Chris Morehart.

Please come out and support your local racers and track.



Steven Phillips with Phillips Run Drip and Bubble Company carried the flag