

# Sports

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## Schuknecht rushes for 236 yards, 3 TDs in win at LFO Panthers blanked at No. 10 Ringgold on short week

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Fort Oglethorpe - Senior running back Connor Schuknecht rushed for 236 yards and 3 touchdowns to lead Union County in a 40-33 victory at Lakeview Fort-Oglethorpe (LFO) on Monday, Sept. 30.

"Things got a little nervous in the second half," Schuknecht said. "But we're playing for each other and I'm glad we came out on top and got the W."

In Union's previous game vs. North Murray, it was the defense that picked up the slack in a 21-0 win - this time, the offense returned the favor in a thriller at LFO.

Originally scheduled for Sept. 27, Hurricane Helene bumped the LFO trip back to Sept. 30, forcing the Panthers into two road games in five days, the latter a 31-0 loss at No. 10 Ringgold on Oct. 4.

"We only had two days of practice before this [LFO] game," Schuknecht said. "It took a toll on us, but we were resilient enough to come out of here with a big win."

At LFO, Union County freshman quarterback Kamden Kendrick connected on 3 touchdown throws, two to Tyler Parker and another to Maddox Young at the 2:34 mark -- putting the Panthers on top 40-33.

Two first-half touchdowns by Schuknecht moved Union out front 13-0, but an LFO score before halftime made it a 13-7 game at the break.

Schuknecht, who posted the first 100-yard game of his career in the previous outing, said after the game, "[My] goal has been to keep getting better and better at moving the rock as the season goes along."

Both offenses woke up



Senior RB Connor Schuknecht (26) scores his second TD of the first half at LFO with some assistance from his teammates. Photo/Todd Forrest

in the second half, and the Panthers seized a 26-14 lead after LFO held a brief 14-13 advantage early in the third.

Consecutive LFO scores had Union trailing 27-26 with 8:53 to play until Kendrick hit Parker for a go-ahead score. The home team answered with 3:37 to play for a 33-32 edge, but the Panthers capped the scoring 63 seconds later when Young pulled down Kendrick's throw in the back corner of the endzone.

The go-ahead score was set up by Bentley Rich's kickoff return to the LFO 25-yard line, and four plays later, on fourth and 12 from the 26, Kendrick went to Young down the sideline, and the senior receiver got a step on the defender, snagging the jump ball and getting a foot

down in the endzone.

"It was fourth and forever, but I wanted the ball," Young said. "They ran a play for me, and we ran it to perfection and it was a great throw by Kamden that allowed me to just go up and get it."

"It's a great feeling. I'm happy for the team and happy we could come out of here with a win and looking forward to what we can do in the future."

Union added a 2-point conversion when Young replaced Kendrick and took the QB keeper up the middle to mount a 40-33 margin.

On the ensuing LFO possession, the Warriors advanced to midfield until Kaden Combs' fourth-down sack sent the Union offense back out in the victory formation.

Kendrick finished 17 for 26 with 241 yards and three scores; Parker caught four passes for a career-high 105 yards and a pair of TDs; Chetley Cox caught a career-best eight passes for 63 yards; Young finished with 6 receptions for 62 yards and a score.

As for Schuknecht, his 236 yards rushing are the most by a Panther in at least 35 years. Although not confirmed, the school's single-game rushing record possibly belongs to Jim Williams, who rushed for 308 yards during a 42-21 win at

Rabun County on Oct. 19, 1973.

Last week, Schuknecht opened the Union County scoring at LFO, putting the finishing touches on the Panthers' 7-play, 56-yard opening drive. Later, following an LFO missed field goal and a Union turnover on downs, Schuknecht capped off an 8-play, 48-yard drive when he powered his way up the middle for 11 yards. The score came despite LFO's defense standing up Schuknecht at the 5-yard line, however, the Union offensive line quickly came to his aid and pushed the rugby scrum over the goal line for a 13-0 lead.

"I can't say enough about Connor," Union County head coach Michael Perry said. "He is such a good running back and is one of the most physical players I have ever coached. And when he's able to run the ball like that, it opens up our passing game tremendously."

Freshman Micah Wallace halted the Warriors' ensuing possession with a red zone interception, but the Panthers stalled and punted back to LFO with time winding down in the half. Starting at the Union 37, the Warriors advanced to the 15, where they connected on a scoring strike to move within six at the half.

LFO opened the third by moving 59 yards on five plays



Senior WR Maddox Young pulls down the go-ahead score late in the fourth quarter at LFO. Photo/Todd Forrest

for its first lead at 14-13. But as was the case all night, Union had an answer.

The Panthers went 87 yards on 18 plays, eventually finding paydirt on Kendrick's 34-yard connection to Parker down the home sideline. Later, after the defense forced a Warriors' three-and-out, Schuknecht broke a 59-yard touchdown up the gut, racing untouched to the endzone and stretching Union's margin to 26-14.

But LFO, who turned to its ground game in the second half, fired back with consecutive scores of 24 and 9 yards and regained the lead 27-26.

With under 9 minutes left and his team needing a score, Kendrick orchestrated a quick three-play scoring drive that began with a 12-yard run by Schuknecht and ended with a 57-yard RPO completion to Parker, when the defender bit on the play fake and allowed the junior wide out to take the quick throw and win the foot race to the goal line.

With LFO needing an answer down 32-27 late, the Warriors covered 72 yards on seven plays -- regaining the lead via a 1-yard score with 3:37 remaining.

But on the ensuing kickoff, Rich scooped up the squib kick at the 15 and weaved through traffic before breaking out of traffic near midfield, eventually getting caught from behind inside the LFO 15.

From there, Schuknecht picked up 3 yards on first down, then Kendrick's pass attempt missed on second. A 5-yard

penalty dropped Union into third and 12, followed by a tipped pass that nearly resulted in an interception, bringing up fourth and 12 and Young's late-game heroics.

With Union up 40-33, the Warriors returned the kickoff to their own 37, then picked up five via a fourth-and-2 option pitch.

A snap infraction dropped LFO into first-and-15 before the home team fired three straight incompletions. On fourth down, Combs came off the right edge and recorded the game-clinching sack when the QB attempted to buy some time by stepping up in the pocket, but instead, he found the arms of Union's senior linebacker.

"We were in a five-man front," Combs said regarding his fourth-down sack. "I was on the outside and Gunner (Franklin) and Alan (Godinez) did their job by getting penetration and [the QB] ran right to me."

"I think the energy from the offense carried over to the defense on that last drive. We knew [LFO] would be passing and the secondary did their job."

Combs finished with 9 tackles, 2 TFLs and one timely sack. Sophomore Alan Godinez finished with a team-high 10 tackles to go with one sack and a TFL. Senior Ethan Lester had 9 stops and broke up a pass; sophomore Brandon Lynch had 8 tackles; Daniel McPhee, Braden Plott and Micah Wallace had 6 tackles each.

Freshman Mikey Davis caught two passes for 11 yards; Rich rushed twice for 3 yards; Young added 5 rushing yards.

## No. 10 Ringgold 31, Union County 0

Ringgold - Four days removed from its thrilling win at LFO, the Panthers returned to northwest Georgia and were held scoreless for the second time this season, suffering a 31-0 loss to a 10th-ranked Ringgold squad led by 30+ seniors.

"Ringgold has a very good defense and we just couldn't take advantage of some of the coverages they were playing," Perry said. "They are a good team and we knew they were a good team, but now we just have to go into our bye week and get ready for Coahulla Creek next week."

Union County coughed up the football four times while being held to a season-low 84 yards of total offense. Kendrick finished 6 for 19 with 34 yards and 2 interceptions; Schuknecht rushed 21 times for 61 yards, but two sacks reduced Union's team rushing total to 50 yards.

Ringgold used a 48-yard



Senior LB Kaden Combs delivers a big hit during last Friday's loss at Ringgold. Photo/Todd Forrest

quarterback keeper to grab a 7-0 lead in the first. During the second, the Tigers added a 42-yard field goal, a 26-yard score through the air and a 7-yard run to mount a 24-0 halftime edge.

Ringgold added a 15-yard touchdown pass late in the third quarter.

Despite the lopsided score, the Panthers' defense limited Ringgold to 283 yards

of total offense. But despite their best efforts, they were ultimately hindered by offensive miscues that led to a Tigers average starting field position at the 47-yard line.

Young finished with 3 catches for 20 yards; Parker caught two passes for 9 yards and Davis had one for 5 yards.

Lester finished with 3 TFLs, a sack and an interception; Lynch added a sack and a TFL; Darin Patterson recovered a fumble.

**Up next:** Union County (3-4, 3-2) takes a much-needed week off before visiting Coahulla Creek on Oct. 18. The Colts currently sit 0-6 and are coming off a 34-13 loss to LFO. Coahulla Creek visits Murray County on Friday, Oct. 11 in a contest that will likely determine last place in Region 7-AA.

"I feel like if we can get one more win, we have a very good shot of getting into the playoffs," Perry said.

# Softball: Union splits four games, rallies past Gilmer on Senior Night

Lady Panthers to wrap up regular season Wednesday, in position for postseason berth

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Union County split its four outings last week, surviving a trip to Murray County in 10 innings and picking up a mon-region win over Gilmer on Senior Night.

Later, Union County dropped a 13-4 contest to North Cobb Christian and fell 9-6 at Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe to close the week. The Lady Panthers wrap up the regular season with a visit to Coahulla Creek on Tuesday, Oct. 8 and host White County on Oct. 9. Both contests start at 5:30 p.m.

Union County currently sits in the low 20s in the Class AA GHSA Postseason rankings and would qualify for a playoff berth with a top-32 finish.

**Lady Panthers 5, Murray County 4 (10 inn)** - Union County scored three in the 10th to grab a 5-2 lead then held off Murray's rally to escape Chatsworth with the win.

Sophomore Izzy Anthros threw all 10 innings (136 pitches), striking out 13 while allowing 8 hits, 3 earned runs and a walk. Junior Delaney Moses drove in one and doubled twice at the plate during a 2-for-5 day. Senior Reese Kelley doubled and scored while going 2 for 5; sophomore Jules Dyer finished 2 for 4 with a walk; Anthros went 2 for 4 with a double, walk and a run; senior Lily Helton drove in two and walked during a 1-for-4 day; senior Jordane Mullanack doubled, scored, and drove in 2 while going 1 for 5.

Tied at 2-2 entering the 10th, Union opened the inning with Sloane Dyer, the automatic runner at second base. The senior quickly swiped third ahead of a four-pitch walk to Helton. And with one away, Mullanack ripped a two-run double to right field, followed by a two-out RBI double from Moses.



Union County seniors (L-R) Lily Collins, Reese Kelley, Sloane Dyer, Jordane Mullanack, Mikala Souther and Lily Helton during last week's Senior Night game vs. Gilmer. Photo/Todd Forrest

Murray started the bottom half with a two-run homer before Anthros retired the next two Indians. With two gone, Murray used a double to bring the winning run to the plate but Anthros' 13th K sealed the win.

Murray homered in the second inning to grab a 1-0 lead but Helton's two-out single tied the game in the third.

Helton made it 2-1 in the fifth when her groundout scored Kelley, but Murray answered with a two-out RBI single in the fifth.

**Lady Panthers 10, Gilmer 7** - Union rallied from a 2-0 deficit with seven unanswered runs, then held off Gilmer's furious late-inning comeback on Senior Night.

Freshman Addison Whitener went 2 for 3 with 2 runs and an RBI; Sloane Dyer drove

in two and scored during a 1-for-3 game; Helton finished 1 for 4 with 2 RBIs; Mullanack scored and went 2 for 4; Moses doubled and scored twice during a 1-for-3 day; senior Mikala Souther went 1 for 3 with a run and an RBI.

Gilmer got two in the second but Union evened the game with Helton's two-out single in the third, scoring Sloane Dyer and Whitener. Later, in the fourth, an error off the bat of Souther made it 4-2, then Whitener's base hit bumped the margin to 5-2 before another Gilmer error made it 7-2 through 4 innings.

Gilmer inched closer with a two-run fifth but Moses' two-out double and Souther's RBI single extended the lead to 8-4 entering the sixth. Two hits, two errors and a walk allowed the

Bobcats to move within 8-7 in the sixth but Sloane Dyer's sac fly and Jules Dyer's two-run single added some insurance.

Kelley got the start in the circle and picked up the win - going 4 innings, allowing 4 runs (2 earned), 5 hits and a walk while striking out three.

Ayla Jamison fired 1 1/3 innings of no-hit softball with 2 strikeouts; Whitener worked 1 2/3, giving up 3 unearned runs, 3 hits and 3 walks.

**Lady Panthers 4, North Cobb Christian 13** - Union County hosted NCC on Thursday, Oct. 3, falling behind 6-0 after two, then giving up three in the fifth and four in the sixth.

Down 6-0, Union put up a 3-spot in the third when Whitener and Sloane Dyer each doubled, Lily Helton reached on an error, Mullanack singled

and freshman Lexi Davenport manufactured a run via a fielder's choice.

During the North Cobb fifth, three singles, a walk and a wild pitch put Union in a 9-3 hole, and then three more singles, two errors and a walk made it 13-3 in the sixth.

The Lady Panthers got one back in the bottom half when Anthros singled and scored on Whitener's double.

Jamison went an inning, allowing 5 hits, 7 runs (3 earned) and fanning two. Kelley tossed 5 innings, giving up 7 hits, 6 earned runs and 3 walks.

Whitener doubled twice, scored and drove in one during a 2-for-4 performance. Mullanack finished 2 for 3; Sloane Dyer doubled and scored during her 1-for-4 day; Anthros went 1 for 4 with a run; Souther walked

twice and scored; Davenport added a walk.

**Lady Panthers 6, LFO 9** - Union County stormed back from a 5-1 deficit to even the score at LFO on Friday, Oct. 4, but the Warriors got three in the fourth and one in the fifth to put the Lady Panthers away.

Whitener doubled and drove in one during a 2-for-4 day; Helton scored twice while going 2 for 3; Jules Dyer went 1 for 2 with an RBI; Mullanack finished 1 for 3, including a double, an RBI, a stolen base and a run.

Kelley scored and finished 1 for 3, Moses went 1 for 3 and Stella Collins scored a run.

Anthros allowed 8 runs (5 earned) over 3 1/3 innings, allowing 7 hits, 4 walks and striking out three. Kelley gave up four hits and an earned run with two strikeouts and two free passes.

Down 1-0 in the second, Mullanack tied the game when she reached on an error that scored Helton. LFO answered back with four in the bottom half courtesy of two doubles, a single, a walk and an error.

The Lady Panthers rebounded with four of their own in the fourth, beginning with four straight hits to start the inning. Sloane Dyer led off with a base hit, Helton singled and Jules Dyer drove in her sister with an opposite-field single.

Mullanack's double moved Union within two, and the courtesy runner, Collins, came around on a wild pitch. The Lady Panthers tied the game when Mullanack came around on an LFO error.

But LFO used four hits, an error, a sac fly and a hit batter to grab an 8-5 edge in the bottom half of the fourth, then two walks and a single in the fifth made it 9-5.

Whitener's two-out double in the seventh scored Kelley to bring the final tally to 9-6.

## Volleyball: North Cobb Christian, Coahulla Creek knock off Panthers in Region 7-AA finale



Union County volleyball seniors were recognized on Monday, Oct. 7 ahead of the Rabun County match. More details and photos from the Senior Night festivities will be available in next week's edition of the North Georgia News. Pictured: (L-R) Seniors Lily Brookshire, Mallory Rouse, Katelyn Brown and Charlei Robinson. Photo/UCHS

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**Dalton** - Union County (14-16) lost its final two Region 7-AA contests of the year by scores of 2-0 to North Cobb Christian and Coahulla Creek and currently sits 21st among public schools in the Georgia High School Association's Class AA Postseason rankings.

The Panthers hosted Rabun County on Monday, Oct. 7 for Senior Night. Details from the season finale will be in next week's paper.

The Region 7-AA tournament begins on Tuesday, Oct. 8 at Coahulla Creek.

**Panthers 0, Coahulla Creek 2 (17-25, 22-25)** - Seniors Mallory Rouse and Charlei Robinson led Union County with three kills each in a 2-0 loss at Coahulla Creek.

Rouse added 3 aces, senior Katelyn Brown had 2 kills and sophomore Sofia Foster added a pair of blocks.

Senior Lily Brookshire, junior Mady Adams and Foster had one kill each for the Panthers. Freshman Samantha Combs, sophomore Payton Murphy and Brown each finished with an ace.

Brookshire had 11 digs, Robinson had eight, Brown finished with seven and freshman Emmy Sosensky had six. Brookshire led Union with



The Union County volleyball seniors are on the verge of returning to the postseason after missing out in 2023. With a playoff berth, Union County would make it six playoff appearances in the program's first eight seasons. Photo/Todd Forrest

5 assists and Brown chipped in two.

**Panthers 0, North Cobb Christian 2 (19-25, 20-25)** - Union County fell in straight sets to the Region 7-AA regular season champions in the second of two matches at Coahulla Creek last week.

Brookshire recorded 5

kills, Brown had four, Rouse and Foster had three apiece. Sophomore Emmy Kight and Robinson each had two; freshman Livia Haney added one kill.

Brown recorded 4 aces and Foster had two blocks.

Robinson had 10 digs; Brookshire and Brown both notched 8 digs.

Brown ended the match with 7 assists, Brookshire had six, Robinson had four and junior Jordan Beavers added two.

**Up next:** The region tournament will conclude this week. The State Tournament gets underway Oct. 15, should Union County qualify.

## XC: Hunter fourth, Union men ninth at Unicoi meet



Lola Hunter (top) placed fourth overall at White County's Unicoi meet, while the Union men logged a top-10 later in the day. Photo/UCHS



Other runners included junior Trey Hawley in 71st at 19:39.50 and sophomore Bryson Brooks at 19:53.

In the girls' race, senior Lydia Wagner was 76th at 25:28, junior Avery Hussion placed 85th at 25:59; junior Avery Tanner was 88th at 26:09.

Freshman Kate Barrett came in 95th with a time of 26:23; senior Katie Payne was 108th at 26:58.

North Hall took home first in both the boys and girls races. Fannin County's Lindsey Holloway earned individual gold in the girls event.

Union County will take time off for Fall Break and return to action on Oct. 22 at Coahulla Creek.