

Sports

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Hughes and Henry lift No. 9 Union County past Towns Panthers' late rally comes up short in 67-62 loss to Calvary Day

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

No. 9 Union County needed Hayden Hughes' school-record-tying nine 3-pointers and a Houston Henry triple double to rally from a 14-point deficit and escape Towns County with a 67-62 victory in last Thursday's season opener.

"Even when we were down, I felt pretty good," Union County head coach Corey Garrett said. "I knew Towns was playing about as well as they could and we were really stagnant, so I knew we'd be fine. In the second half, we started doing some good things, but when we started turning it over at the end and Towns cut it down to six, that's when I started losing my mind."

On Saturday afternoon, Union County dropped a 67-62 contest to Savannah's Calvary Day in the Sandy's Spiel Tip-Off Classic at Habersham Central High School.

The Panthers resume play on Friday, Nov. 22 when they host Towns County in the home opener. With football season wrapping up on Nov. 15, Union County expects to be at full strength when they host the Indians for the rematch.

No. 9 Panthers 75, Towns County 67 - Hughes finished with 29 points and 13 rebounds while connecting on 9 of 18 from long distance, and Henry logged a 25-point, 12-assist, 11-rebound triple-double in Union's come-from-behind win.

The Panthers fell behind 5-0 against a hot-shooting Indians team that finished 12 of 29 from 3-point range and led by as much as 24-10 early in the second quarter.

But that's when Hughes started to heat up. With his team still trailing 26-18, he connected on three consecutive triples to hand Union its first lead at 27-26. Towns County fired back with a 12-0 run to grow its lead back to double figures until Hughes' fourth trey of the half moved the Panthers within eight at 38-30 entering the break.

"[Towns] was swinging



Houston Henry recorded a triple double during Union County's win at Towns County last week. Photo/Todd Forrest

for the fences for sure," Garrett said. "But Towns County took Tallulah Falls down to the wire so they have a good team. They're just young and not very deep. But I told the guys, you don't just walk into Towns County and come out with a win, regardless if they're 0-20 or 20-0."

Down 38-32 early in the third, Hughes knocked down two 3-pointers, moving Union within 40-38 at the 4:50 mark. Junior Holden Payne drilled a trey from the top of the key a minute later, and on the ensuing possession, Henry sank two free throws to push the Panthers ahead 43-42.

Union continued inching ahead when Henry scored off a steal and Hughes connected on his seventh trey for a 48-42 advantage at the period's 3-minute mark. Hughes' eighth 3-pointer made it 51-44, but Towns County answered with the last 4 points of the frame, including a 3 at the horn, to

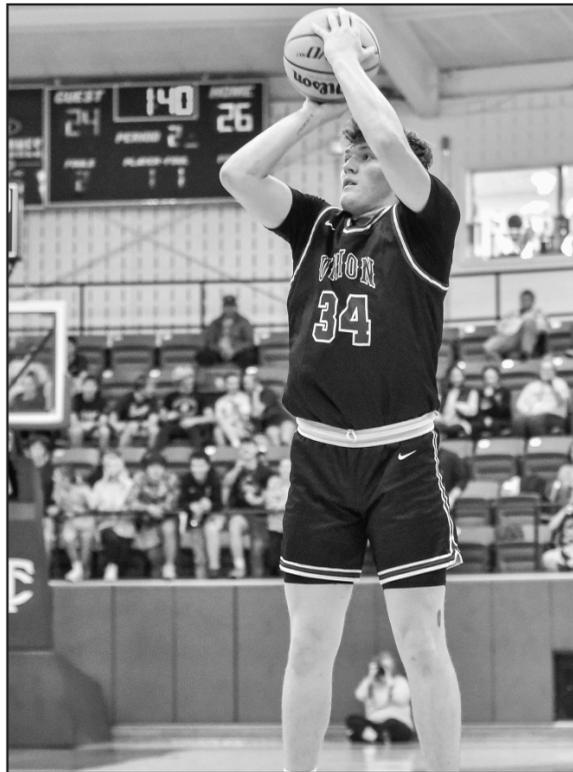
move within 51-48.

A putback by Henry opened the fourth-quarter scoring, but Towns stormed ahead for a brief 56-55 edge before Hughes' ninth triple put Union back on top.

Moments later, sophomore Ethan Hogsed came up with a steal, resulting in two free throws on the other end. The Panthers bumped its lead to 64-57 courtesy of junior Vince Marevka's offensive board and Henry's floater at the 3-minute mark.

Marevka dropped in two more for a 66-57 lead, and a Towns County 3 was answered by a fullcourt pass from Henry to Hughes for a layup with 1:35 to play.

Hogsed and Henry hit two from the foul line to open up a 72-60 advantage with 55 seconds remaining. An Indians' 3 and a Union turnover opened the door for the home team, eventually moving within 72-66. Still, Henry put the game



Hayden Hughes' third 3 of the game caps a 17-2 Union run that awarded Union its first lead at 27-26. Photo/Todd Forrest

away by sinking 3 of 4 at the line over the final 38 seconds.

Marevka finished with 12 points and 8 rebounds; Hogsed had 4 points and 3 steals; Payne had 3 points and 2 boards; sophomore Ryland Chambers finished with 2 points and 3 boards; sophomore Hayden Price ended the night with 2 rebounds.

Towns County freshman Tucker Engert had 23 points, 6 rebounds and 4 assists on 5 of 9 from downtown. Jonas Rouse went 4 of 8 from long range to finish with 16 points. Dustin Barrett and Cruz Kitchens added 10 points apiece.

No. 9 Panthers 62, Calvary Day 67 - Led by 6-foot-9 post Kuol Alor Deng and junior guard Demetrius Brown, Calvary Day held on to a 37-27 halftime lead behind Brown's game-high 20 points.

"Unless someone surprises me, outside of North Cobb Christian, I don't think we'll see a team better than Calvary Day

in the regular season," Garrett said. "But we got our football guys coming back and I feel pretty good about our team."

Despite trailing by double digits at the break, Union County came out hot and built an early 13-8 margin behind treys from Henry, Hogsed and Hughes. However, Calvary Day closed the quarter with a 9-0 run and took a 17-13 edge into the second.

The Panthers regained the lead at 18-17 courtesy of Payne and Marevka, and later, down 27-25, Union was outscored 10-2 over the final 2:20 of the half.

Calvary Day extended its lead to 51-33 but Union started chipping away with a Hughes 3 and two Henry free throws. Maddox Young, fresh off the gridiron, got in on the action with a baseline drive for 2, and Henry hit two more free throws to close the gap to 53-44 entering the final frame.

Henry's 22-footer and

Young's floater had Union within 55-49 at the 6-minute mark until Calvary Day opened up some breathing room via a 6-0 spurt.

A Hughes 3, a Marevka deuce and a Henry free throw kept Union within six at the 2-minute mark. Then Henry hit 2 of 2 at the line with 1:32 remaining, slicing the deficit to 61-57, but that's as close as the Panthers would get.

Henry had 18 points, 11 rebounds, 9 assists and 2 steals. Marevka had 14 points, 9 rebounds and 2 steals; Hughes had 9 points; Young scored 7 points off the bench; Hogsed had 7 points and 2 assists; Payne had 6 points.

Senior Kaden Combs returned from football to log 13 minutes and finish with 2 steals, a rebound and an assist. Price had 2 rebounds; Chambers had a rebound and a steal.

"Maddox and Kaden wanted to play, so I gave them a few minutes," Garrett said. "What that means going forward, as far as the starting lineup goes, we'll have to wait and see, but we look forward to having them back at practice this week."

Up next: Union County hosts Towns County at 7 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 22.

During last week's win over Towns, Hughes nine 3-pointers equaled the record held by Blake Williams (2003-04), Mike Ross (twice in 2005-06) and Pierson Allison (2018-19)

Three of Union's five 9-trey performances came either at Towns County or vs. the Indians. Ross hit nine vs. Cherokee County, Alabama in the 2005 Battle of the States; Allison sank nine in a home win vs. Towns County in November 2018.

Additionally, Lake Hughes hit eight 3s in Dec. 2021 as Union knocked off the defending state champs in Hiawassee.

As for Hayden Hughes, he is now five 3s short of breaking Ross' school record of 186 treys during his career. Meanwhile, Henry is 17 points shy of 1,000.

UCRD: 6th grade Panthers host Chestatee in Saturday's Super Bowl

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Union County's 6th grade Panthers will square off with Chestatee in the Mountain Athletic Conference Super Bowl at 7 p.m. Saturday at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

The top-seeded Panthers punched their ticket to the championship by rallying from an 8-0 halftime deficit to defeat fourth-seeded Dawson County 14-8.

Down 8-0 in the third, Sawyer Fox turned the tide by picking off a Tigers' pass, setting up Coltyn Sandler's 3-yard keeper on 2nd-and-goal.

Tied at 8-8 after Fox's 2-point PAT, the defense forced another stop, allowing Parker Dillinger to add the go-ahead score with under 5 minutes to play.

The Union defense delivered one last time, denying Dawson County on 4th-and-goal from the 5-yard line with under a minute left.

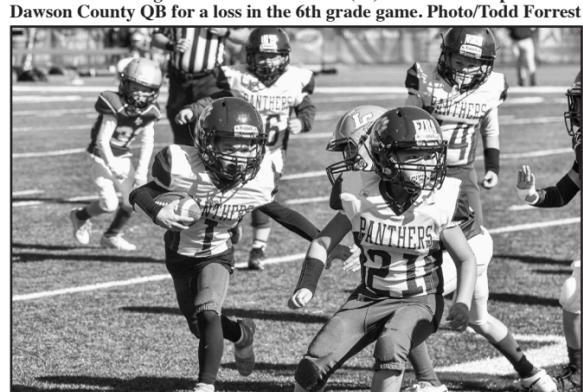
In other UCRD games, the 2nd and 4th grade teams came up short in their bids to reach the Super Bowl. The 2nd graders fell 28-14 to Lumpkin. The 4th grade suffered a 14-12 loss to Dawson.



Parker Dillinger puts Union County on top 14-8 during the fourth quarter of Saturday's 6th-grade playoff win over Dawson County in Blue Ridge. Later, got in on the game-saving stop on 4th-and goal to preserve the victory. Photo/Todd Forrest



Alex Resendiz congratulates Canaan Allen (44) after Allen drops the Dawson County QB for a loss in the 6th grade game. Photo/Todd Forrest



Union County 2nd grader JP Waggener (1) follows his blockers during Saturday's playoff game vs. Lumpkin County. Photo/Todd Forrest

Lady Panthers looking for first 3-0 start in five years

Union County takes care of business vs. Towns and Habersham Central

By Todd Forreest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

The Lady Panthers are 2-0 following a pair of blowout road wins at Towns County and Habersham Central and can improve to 3-0 for the first time since their region championship season of 2019-20 when they host Towns County on Friday, Nov. 22.

"We've been able to get off to a good start in every game and I just hope we can keep that up the rest of the season," Union County head coach Thomas Nelson said.

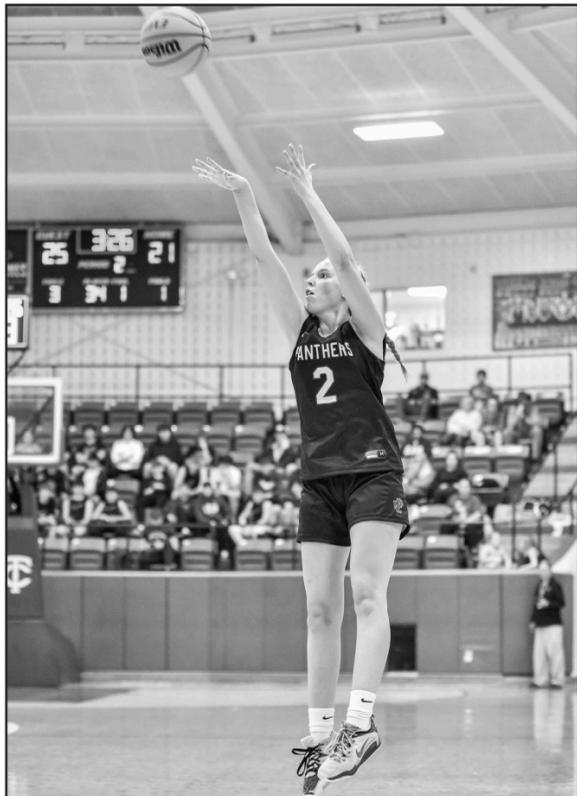
Lady Panthers 78, Towns County 54 - Senior Ariel McCarter scored a team-high 16 points, and sophomore Regan Trlica chipped in 15 as Union County raced ahead 11-0 and never trailed in the program's ninth-straight win over the rival Indians.

"I was really proud of our post players and how they were able to get open and finish," Nelson said. "Our guards being able to find them really helped us a whole lot."

Despite the early onslaught, Towns County battled back to within 14-9 and trailed 17-12 after one. Later, Ava Thompson's 3 had Towns within a point at 19-18 early in the second, but Aubrie Akins' transition layup and three straight Trlica buckets extended the lead to 28-21, helping Union build a 38-30 halftime advantage.

The second half was all Lady Panthers, beginning with a Sloane Dyer 3 less than 30 seconds into the third. Trlica, McCarter, Hope Taylor and Akins stretched the lead to 51-35 near the midway point of the quarter, then Trlica and another Dyer 3 blew things open at 56-36.

"We were able to get out and press them and that changed the speed of the game," Nelson said. "Anytime we're able to



Sophomore guard Regan Trlica knocks down a 3 during the first half of Union's win at Towns County. Photo/Todd Forreest

get out and run, it's going to help us."

Union kept its foot on the gas with McCarter and Akins positioning their team out front 60-36 before Scotlyn Fain's 3 finally halted the 17-1 run.

In the fourth, treys by McCarter and Nomi Nelson, followed by Dyer's dribble drive and Akins' 16-footer, opened up a 78-45 lead.

Ariel McCarter ended with 9 assists, 5 rebounds and 2 steals to go with her team-high 16 points. Trlica had 15 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists and blocked a shot; Dyer finished with 10 points, 6 rebounds, 3 assists and 3 steals; Taylor fouled out with 10 points and 11 boards; Akins had 8 points, 8 rebounds and a block; Kate-lyn Brown had 7 points, 10

rebounds, 3 assists and a steal; Mady Adams ended with 6 points; Nomi Nelson had 4 points; Ragan McCarter had 2 points; Tatum Fisher added a rebound; Amaria Johnson had an assist.

Towns County was led by senior Kaleigh Beaver's 19 points, 5 rebounds and 2 steals. Thompson had 17 points on 5 of 11 from downtown; Fain had 8 points and 6 assists.

Lady Panthers 56, Habersham Central 32 - Once again, Union County came out hot and cruised to an easy win in Saturday's Sandy's Spiel Tip-Off Classic at Habersham Central.

Trlica scored a career-high 23 points along with 3 assists and a steal. Taylor had 7 points, 8 boards and 2 blocks.



Towns County had no answer in the post for Union County's 6-foot-1 senior Hope Taylor. Photo/Todd Forreest

The Lady Panthers jumped out to a 17-4 lead after a quarter behind 9 points from Trlica, but Habersham kept Union from pulling away in the second, staying within 12 for most of the quarter for a 29-19 halftime score.

Up 29-21 early in the third, Union started pulling away when Taylor scored on a putback and Ragan McCarter drilled a corner jumper. Back-to-back buckets by Trlica opened up a 37-21 lead at the quarter's 3-minute mark then Ragan McCarter's floater bumped the margin to 18.

The Lady Panthers held a 41-23 advantage after three and following a Habersham's trey to start the fourth, Trlica answered with a traditional 3-point play and Nelson

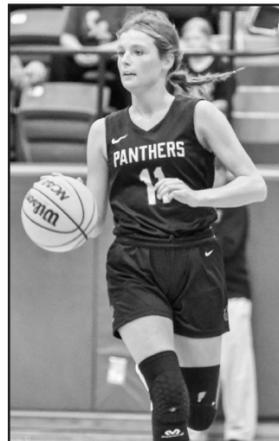
knocked down a triple to build a 47-26 lead with 5:08 to play.

The Raiders eventually climbed to within 17 but Nomi Nelson's trey at the 2:30 mark put the game to rest.

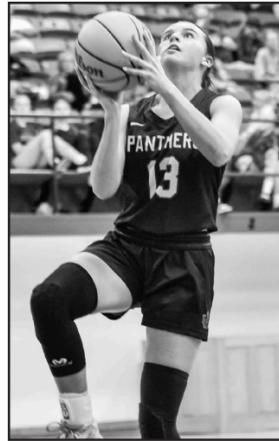
The sophomore backcourt duo of Nelson and Ragan McCarter had 6 points each; Akins had 6 points; Brown had 4 points; Ariel McCarter scored 3 points; Mady Adams added a free throw.

"Anytime we can still win with Ariel only having 3 points, that's a big deal for us," Coach Nelson said. "She is our leading scorer most of the time but with the way [Trlica] is coming along, we're really excited about those two."

Habersham Central freshman Tessa Murdock finished with 16 points and 18



Ariel McCarter



Sloane Dyer

rebounds. **Up next:** Union County hosts Towns County at 7 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 22.

"I tell you what, Towns County has some ball players and we're going to have our hands full in the rematch," Coach Nelson said. "Beaver and Thompson played excellent for them and we're going to have to find some way to slow them down."

"We also know that Fain only had 8 points and she's one of their best players. She's going to play much better when they come over here. If all three of them get going, they can put up a lot of points on you."

Football: Panthers' season ends in 37-6 loss at No. 9 Sumter County

By Todd Forreest
Sports Editor
sports@nganews.com

Americus - Union County's offense struggled to find its footing in a 37-6 loss at No. 9 Sumter County in the first round of the Class AA State Tournament on Friday, Nov. 15.

"[Sumter was] just too good and too quick," Coach Michael Perry said. "Their only loss was to Carver-Columbus, which might be the best team in the state."

The Panthers (4-7) were limited to 127 yards of offense and started 0-for-8 on third down before converting during the fourth quarter. Down 37-0, Union County found the endzone late in the fourth when Connor Schuknecht rumbled for 22 yards, setting up a 12-yard fourth-and-goal completion from Kamden Kendrick to fellow freshman Jax Dillinger.

Sumter opened the scoring with a 10-play, 66-yard drive, capped off by a 10-yard touchdown run. Later, with time winding down in the first, Sumter extended its lead to 9-0 via a 27-yard field goal.

Following another Union three-and-out, Sumter went up 16-0 when a short screen pass turned into a 37-yard score. The visitors fell into a 23-0 hole at the half when Sumter put the finishing touches on an eight-play scoring drive.

A 39-yard rushing touchdown and an 8-yard QB scramble during the third put Union



Freshman tight end Jax Dillinger scored his first high school touchdown at Sumter County. Photo/Todd Forreest

in a 37-0 hole near the 6-minute mark of the quarter.

Schuknecht finished with 43 yards on 11 carries and caught two passes for 5 yards. The senior back finishes the year with 1,124 yards and 10 scores on the ground. For his career, Schuknecht amassed 2,052 yards rushing and 17 touchdowns.

Senior Maddox Young caught three passes for 22 yards; sophomore Bentley Rich had a 14-yard reception and gained 22 yards on six carries; junior Cade Walden had one grab for 5 yards; sophomore

Chetley Cox added a 2-yard reception; Dillinger had a 12-yard touchdown catch.

Kendrick completed 9 of 21 for 60 yards with 2 yards rushing.

The Panthers were without three injured starters: Ethan Lester, Tyler Parker and Jaxon Totherow.

"I appreciate this senior class so much," Perry said. "Without them, we don't even make the playoffs. I can't say enough about each one of those guys and the contributions they made to our football program. They will surely be missed."

Union Co. swim team earns nine top-10s at Tallulah Falls in season's fourth meet

UCHS SWIM

TOP 10 FINISHES

VETERAN'S LUAU @ TALLULAH FALLS 11/16

<p>200 Medley Relay 8th - Andrew Nushtayev, Ian Lander, John Tippens, Nicholas Nushtayev</p>	<p>200 Free 5th - Nicholas Nushtayev 6th - Lily Helton</p>
<p>50 Free 4th - Nicholas Nushtayev</p>	<p>100 Fly 9th Wyatt Chandler</p>
<p>200 Free Relay 7th - Andrew Nushtayev, Ian Lander, John Tippens, Nicholas Nushtayev</p>	<p>100 Back 7th - Lily Helton</p>
<p>100 Breast 8th - Andrew Nushtayev 10th - Isabel Hoover</p>	

The Union County Middle and High School Swim teams have officially kicked off their season with a strong and competitive start. The Middle School team attended their first meet on Nov. 9 in Clarkesville, coming home with several personal best times and two new school records by Wyatt Yancey. The High School team has attended their first three meets on Nov. 2 in Cherokee County, Nov. 7 in Darlington and Nov. 9 in Calhoun, also bringing home personal bests each meet as well as two State cuts by Nicholas Nushtayev in the 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard freestyle. Coaches Kelly Helton and Megan Foster look forward to an accomplished season with these talented athletes. Go Panthers!

Union County 12U soccer team wraps up spectacular 2024 season



Union County's 12U soccer team finished with undefeated season -- scoring 80 goals and allowing less than 15. These boys are the definition of character and team play! Every single player, 14 in all, scored at least once this season, even the goalie and defensive line. This is all because they worked together and made sure to make opportunities for all their teammates.

UCHS Wrestling getting underway



Union County wrestlers at Oconee County's Warrior Round Robin on Saturday. Photo/Jaime Legatt
The Panthers went 3-2 at Oconee County despite missing some key wrestlers due to football. Union County defeated Oconee County, Harlem and Franklin County. The Panthers losses came to Elbert County and Hart County. Union County will wrestle at home on Tuesday, Nov. 19 at 6 p.m. The varsity, junior varsity and girls teams will all be in action.