

Basketball: Winless Panthers seeking a lift from returning players

By Todd Forrest
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Union County basketball welcomed its football players back to the hardwood prior to Thanksgiving but it will take a little more time to knock the rust away.

The Panthers will have three chances to get back into rhythm this week when they host Tallulah Falls and Towns before visiting Fannin County.

Panthers 46, White County 58 - During Union's Monday night contest with White County (3-3) at North Hall, the football players saw limited action as head coach Corey Garrett slowly works them back into the rotation.

Senior Kyle Morlock came off the bench to lead the Panthers with 13 points in a 58-46 loss to the Warriors.

Senior point guard Pierson Allison was scoreless in the first half but had seven in the second half - including one trey.

Sawyer Drake battled foul trouble to finish with five. Cayden Rich added three and Kaston Hemphill was held scoreless.

Meanwhile, sophomore Lake Hughes knocked down three treys for an 11-point game, Sawyer Brey added four and Bryson Lariscy finished with three.

Union was able to keep it close, trailing 14-12, 29-21 and 40-32 at the quarter breaks but it wasn't enough to overtake White County as sophomore guard Silas Mulligan led all scorers with 15.

Junior Cooper Turner and senior Will Sampson each chipped in 12 points for the



Cayden Rich (left) and the 6-foot-6 Kyle Morlock are two senior football players expected to make an impact this winter. Photo/Todd Forrest

Panthers 53, North Hall 59 - The following day, the Panthers faced North Hall at White County where they found themselves dealing with an early double-digit deficit.

After the game was tied 11-11 at the 2:30 mark of the first, the Warriors would outscore Union 21-10 over the next six minutes to take a 32-21 advantage.

Trailing 36-27 at the break, Union County found itself on the receiving end of an 11-3 run to start the third as the Trojans extended their lead

to 47-30 near the midway point of the quarter.

North Hall (4-1) wouldn't hit another field goal the rest of the way but they managed to fend off the Panther rally by hitting 17 second half free throws.

With the football players remaining on the bench in this game, Garrett allowed his youngsters to gain valuable experience during a tightly contested fourth quarter.

Down by 17, Hughes and Landon Cox each scored four points to close out the third and bring Union to within 10 at 48-



Coach Corey Garrett (center) lights a fire under his team during a timeout prior to the Panthers erasing North Hall's 17-point second half advantage. Photo/Todd Forrest

38 to start the fourth. Landon Kight cut the lead to 48-40 then Brey made it a six-point game less than a minute into the final frame.

After a Daniel Snow basket brought Union within four at 48-44, the Trojan coach was tagged with a technical foul and Lariscy sank both free throws for a 48-46 score with 5:11 to play.

North Hall hit 1-of-2 at the line but Snow responded with a put-back to pull the Panthers within a point at the four-minute mark.

Brey fouled out with

3:13 remaining and the ensuing North Hall free throws sparked a 6-0 spurt before a bucket by Snow stopped the bleeding at 55-50 with 41 seconds left.

The Trojans split a pair with 33 seconds left, pushing the margin to six, which is where it would stay as North Hall survived 59-53.

Cox led the Panthers with 12 points while Brey and Hughes scored 10 points apiece.

Snow added eight, Lariscy had seven and Kight scored six.

Twelve different Trojans scored but only senior Brock Cooper reached double figures with 12.

Up next: Union will host 2-2 Tallulah Falls, who already owns a 65-58 win over White County.

On Friday the Panthers will host Towns County in a rematch before visiting Fannin on Saturday. The Rebels are 2-2 with losses to Gilmer and Pickens.

Region 8-AA play will begin next Friday with Elbert County at home and at Monticello on Saturday.



Landon Cox (13) glides to the basket for two points during the first half vs North Hall. Photo/Todd Forrest



The play of Daniel Snow (34) gave Union a lift during its second half rally vs North Hall. Photo/Todd Forrest

Gymnastics: Erin Raper signs with Glenville



Mountain Gymnastics Center Gymnast Erin Raper (seated-middle) alongside family and coaches as she signed with West Virginia's Glenville State during a ceremony last month at MGC. Photo/Todd Forrest

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After representing Blairsville's Mountain Gymnastics Center all across the southeast for 10-plus years, Erin Raper will take her talents to the Mountain State as a member of the Glenville (WV) State College Acrobatics and Tumbling squad.

"Last summer, the Glenville coach contacted me for a visit and I already had another visit planned at another school in the area," Raper said. "But once I visited (Glenville), I immediately fell in love and we didn't even

visit the other school." According to Raper, who is a senior at Hiwassee Dam High School in North Carolina, one of the selling points of Glenville was not having to alter her wardrobe all that much.

"Of course, (Glenville's school colors) are blue and white," she said with a laugh. "Their coach is so friendly and so personable. The campus is really nice and it felt like home.

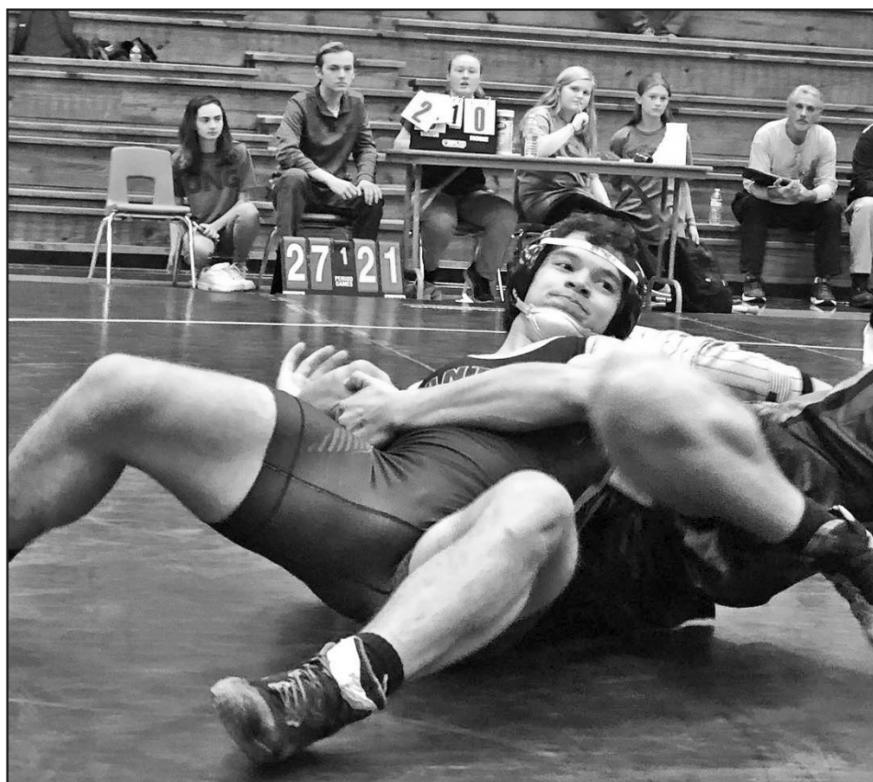
"I want to thank (MGC coaches) Ms. Shelly (Thomas) and Caroline (Thomas) and everybody that has helped guide me through these last 10 years.

"MGC is my home away

from home, I've spent a lot of time here and there have been a lot of people here that have made an impact on me."

"As coaches we are very proud of her for deciding to continue her athletic career at the collegiate level," MGC coach Shelley Thomas added. "She has always been a hard-working, dedicated and coachable young lady which has allowed her to progress to the collegiate level. Erin showed a lot of perseverance and dedication as she overcame knee surgery the summer before her last season. We are very proud of her achieving her goal to be a collegiate athlete."

Wrestling: Union County gearing up for this weekend's King of the Mountain Tournament



Union senior Cristian Martinez during last week's home match vs Jackson County. Photo/Tiffany Martinez

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Towns County's King of the Mountain Tournament is one of the premier wrestling events in all of Northeast Georgia and the Panthers will once again take part in the two-day competition when it gets underway on Friday, Dec. 6.

Union County got a little taste of this weekend's action when they hosted Towns County on Nov. 19 and came away with a 42-30 victory over the tournament hosts.

Last week, the Panthers came up short 38-33 to Jackson County.

During the 2018 edition of KOTM, the Panthers finished 14th out of 25 teams.

Alex Barrett placed second at 145 pounds, Isaac Tritt was fourth at 152, Logan Tritt fell one round shy of reaching the consolation match and Cristian Martinez was victorious in his opening round match.

The tournament gets underway Friday evening at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center.