

# Sports

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## No. 8 Panthers pick up weekend wins over Sonoraville, Lithonia Union County faces three unbeaten Region 7-AA squads this week

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

The 8th-ranked Union County men secured two wins last week, surviving hot-shooting Sonoraville's upset bid in Friday's Region 7-AA opener and blowing out Class 4A Lithonia on Saturday.

The Panthers (5-1) will face three tough region tests this week, beginning with undefeated Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe (7-0, 2-0) on Tuesday at home, followed by Friday's trip to Coahulla Creek (3-1, 2-0) and a Saturday home meeting with third-ranked North Cobb Christian (4-1, 1-0).

"This may be the biggest week of basketball that we've had in a long time," Union County head coach Corey Garrett said. "In terms of before the Christmas break, this is probably the biggest week I've ever coached in. Everybody we play is undefeated in region play."

**No. 8 Panthers 72, Sonoraville 69** - Union County rallied from 10-down on Friday night in Blairsville to fend off a Phoenix squad that started 5 for 5 from 3-point range and hit 8 of its first 10 attempts from behind the arc.

"They never really cooled off," Garrett said. "We switched to [man-to-man] and they didn't shoot as many, but they kept hitting."

"My scouting report to the guys didn't have [Sonoraville] shooting like that. I'll be the first to admit it. I called that first timeout and told them, 'I didn't know this was going to happen, boys.' I watched a lot of film on Sonoraville, and they didn't do anything that resembled that."

For the game, Sonoraville hit 14 of 22 (64%) from long distance, but the Panthers pushed ahead in the third quarter and never trailed again, eventually building a 68-57 advantage with under 5 minutes left.

But the Phoenix didn't go away, chipping the margin to 68-61 with under 4 minutes to play and climbing within 71-67 inside 1 minute.

Kaden Combs split two free throws with 30 seconds remaining to bump the lead to 72-67, and Sonoraville missed a layup on the other end, sealing the win for Union County.

Maddox Young finished with a career-high 20 points on 9 of 18 from the floor, 7 rebounds, 4 steals and 3 assists. Hayden Hughes ended his night with 18 points and 10 rebounds on 4 of 12 from 3-point range.

Houston Henry scored a season-low 11 points but handed out 8 assists, grabbed 5 rebounds and added a steal and a block.

Sonoraville shot 47% from the floor, compared to



Senior Houston Henry with a no-look pass vs. Sonoraville. He had 27 points in Saturday's win over Lithonia. Henry is averaging 19 points, 8 assists and 6 rebounds through six games. Photo/Todd Forrest

Union County's 41%, but the Panthers made up the difference with their work on the offensive glass, where they held a 25-8 advantage that resulted in a 34-16 scoring margin in the paint.

"We did exactly what we talked about doing: We hammered the offensive glass and won the rebound battle, and ultimately, that's what saved us," Garrett said. "We're not a big team so that's something we're going to have to find a way to do every night. If we can keep doing that every night, we're going to be super successful."

"Shooting will come and go, but things that don't come and go are rebounding, getting after loose balls and getting on the floor."

Sonoraville hit its first five 3-point attempts to mount a 15-9 early edge and a 27-23 lead after one quarter. The Phoenix opened up a 10-point second-quarter gap, but Union County tied things up at the break via a 10-0 run.

Following a Sonoraville trey that placed the Panthers in a 39-29 hole with 2:50 remaining in the half and prompted a Garrett timeout, Young's 10-footer sparked Union's rally ahead of the intermission.

Combs hit 1 of 2 at the line, then, off a Sonoraville miss, Young fired ahead to Holden Payne for an and-1 on the other end. Hughes' putback moved Union within 39-37 with 1:19 on the clock, and Young's steal-and-score tied things up moments later.

Union's first lead of the night came at 44-42 when Henry knocked down a transition 3 at the 6:27 mark of the third, then Combs scored inside on the ensuing possession to cap a 7-0 spurt.

Hughes' 3 put Union up 51-46, and Ethan Hogsed's free throw made it 55-49 with 1:50 left in the quarter, but Sonoraville answered with two 3s to close the third with the Panthers clinging to a 57-55 advantage.

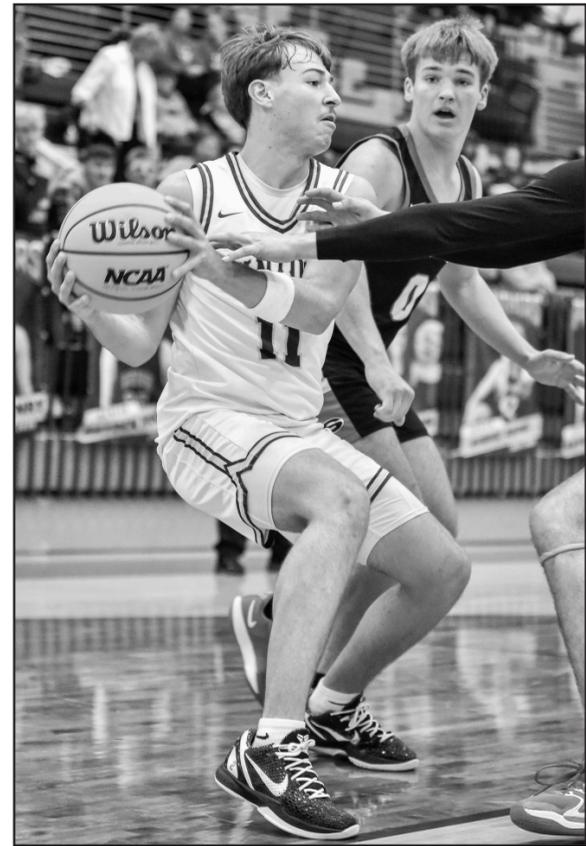
Young's 3 started the fourth period and Vince Marevka's offensive board had Union up 62-57 with 6 minutes to play. Young's free throw, followed by a floater in the paint and a steal that led to a Hughes trey, put the Panthers on top 68-57 with 5:02 to go.

A Union turnover allowed Sonoraville to move within 68-64 with 1:30 remaining, but Henry answered with a 22-footer that extended the margin to seven. Sonoraville countered with a corner 3, but Combs' free throw with 30 seconds left provided enough cushion to preserve the win.

"When a team shoots like [Sonoraville] did, 9 out of 10 times you're losing that game, so I'm proud of the guys," Garrett said.

Combs finished with 5 points and 9 rebounds. Marevka had 8 points and 8 boards. Payne added 8 points and an assist; Hogsed ended up with 2 points, 3 rebounds and 2 assists.

**No. 8 Panthers 68, Li-**



Senior Maddox Young scored a career-high 20 points during Friday's region win over Sonoraville. Photo/Todd Forrest

Young's steal resulted in a quick layup, and Henry continued having his way offensively, knocking down a 3-pointer from the wing.

Lithonia answered with consecutive 3s to pull within 10, but Union closed out the final 3:10 of the half with a 12-3 run, capped by Payne's corner-3.

The Panthers built a 20-point cushion in the third when Marevka pulled down Young's miss and dropped in a bucket for a 50-30 score at the 4:22 mark.

Payne's putback grew Union's lead to 54-32 later in the quarter, and two Henry free throws kept the margin at 22 heading to the fourth.

Sophomore Hayden Price got in on the scoring early in the final frame, and then Hogsed sank two at the line to stop Lithonia's 5-0 spurt.

However, Lithonia wouldn't go away, hitting a pair of 3s and two free throws, slicing Union's lead to 62-49 with 4:20 remaining.

But that's as close as

they'd get as Henry scored 5-straight Panther points to build a 67-50 lead with just over a minute to play.

Young finished with 9 points, 5 rebounds, 4 steals and 3 assists. Payne had 7 points and 2 boards; Combs had 5 points, 5 rebounds and a block; Hogsed had 2 points and a rebound; Price added 2 points; Hughes finished with 5 rebounds, 3 assists and a steal.

**Up next:** Union County and LFO face off Tuesday in Blairsville. The girls get underway at 6 p.m. with the guys to follow.

"[LFO] is long and they're going to have to deal with," Garrett said. "But we're ready to go. I can tell you that."

On Friday, Union travels to Coahulla Creek, who already owns a 10-point win over Sonoraville. Girls tip-off is scheduled for 7 p.m.

The week closes with region favorite and third-ranked North Cobb Christian. Girls tip-off is at 3 p.m. Saturday.



Junior Vince Marevka had a career-best 18 points during Saturday's win over Lithonia. Photo/Todd Forrest

CLASS 2A				GHSA		WEEK 5	
BOYS	SCHOOL	RECORD	MOVEMENT				
#1	CARVER-COLUMBUS	2-0	--				
#2	COLUMBIA	7-3	--				
#3	BUTLER	3-2	--				
#4	SOUTH ATLANTA	5-2	--				
#5	KIPP ATLANTA	3-3	--				
#6	SALEM	5-4	NR				
#7	LANEY	5-2	--				
#8	SPENCER	4-2	+2				
#9	UNION COUNTY	5-1	-1				
#10	HART COUNTY	5-1	-1				

# Wrestling: Panthers crowned at Nightmare Before Christmas

## Union County dominates 16-team field at River Ridge

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

**Woodstock** - Union County took home first place at River Ridge's Nightmare Before Christmas tourney over the weekend with 212.5 points, knocking off defending State champion and top-ranked Rockmart, who placed second out of 16 teams with 161.5 points.

Osborne (159), Campbell (155.5) and Woodstock (131) rounded out the top five.

Payton Legatt (165 lbs), Paxon Legatt (157), Kevin Kilpatrick (175) and Eli Flowers (120) all took home first place in the event. Asa Smith-Foot was second at 190 lbs; Isaiah Batura (150), Thomas Gary (132) and Michael Raines (113) each placed third.

In the girls' tournament, Kristyn Kraft placed first at 140 lbs and Jada Taylor was second at 155.

Payton Legatt scored a 5-0 decision over River Ridge's Miles Lesley in the 165-lb finals and defeated Rockmart's Cayden McBride 10-5 during the semifinal round.

Paxon Legatt defeated Shiloh's Evan Calvin by pinfall during the 157-lb finals. He scored another first-round pin over East Paulding's Aiden Williamson in the semis.

Kilpatrick notched a 19-3 technical fall victory during the third round of his finals bout vs. East Forsyth's Adrian Reyes -- scoring 6 points in the first round, five in the second and eight in the third.



Union County collected five gold medals at River Ridge's Nightmare Before Christmas tournament over the weekend.

Kilpatrick pinned River Ridge's Enrique Perez during his semifinal match.

Eli Flowers earned gold at 120 lbs by defeating River Ridge's Sean Patrick via a 17-0 technical fall. Flowers led 9-0 through two rounds then put things away with 8 points in the third.

Woodstock's Malik McFarley fell victim to a Flowers

pinfall during the semifinal round.

Smith-Foot lost a 17-2 technical fall to East Forsyth's Jackson Moffit in the 190-lb finals after pinning Newton's Calen Davis in the semis.

Batura lost his opening match but battled back to win five bouts in the consolation bracket to place third. Gary won his opening bout but fell in

the quarterfinals. He rebounded with four consolation victories to take home a bronze medal.

Raines also dropped his quarterfinal match but won four straight to finish third.

Other Union County placers included Ayden Lee, who came in fourth at 215. Riley Mortensen was fourth at 138.

Jackson Arthur competed

at 285 but dropped two straight after reaching the quarters.

In girls action, Kraft won an 11-1 major decision over Temple's Madison Arp in the finals. During the semis, she scored a pin over East Forsyth's Olivia Pirkle.

Taylor dropped a 9-3 decision to Alpharetta's Sahana Krishjanthan in the finals bout. During the semis, Taylor

notched a 13-5 decision over Campbell's Brady Bass.

Senior Charlei Robinson competed at 145, dropping consecutive bouts after advancing to the quarters.

**Up next:** Union County competes in the 515 Classic at Gilmer on Thursday at 5 p.m. On Friday, Union travels to Commerce for a dual tournament at 5 p.m.

# Lady Panthers drop back-to-back contests, suffer key injury

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

The 6th-ranked Lady Panthers suffered two double-digit losses and a devastating injury last week during contests vs. Sonoraville and Lakeview Academy.

Senior three-year starter Katelyn Brown injured her hip in the opening moments of the third quarter during Friday's 50-37 loss to No. 8 Sonoraville, placing Union County head coach Thomas Nelson behind the 8-ball.

"She's a glue-type player," Nelson said. "She does a little bit of everything for us. She gets us 10-11 rebounds a night and is going to guard the other team's best player."

"We won't know until later this week what her status will be going forward the rest of the year. She dislocated her hip and the initial MRI reading showed a muscle tear in the hip. We just have to wait to see how serious the tear is."

With Brown out for the foreseeable future, Coach Nelson must navigate a testy 4-game region stretch ahead of the Christmas break.

The Panthers host a struggling, but talented, Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe on Tuesday before visiting No. 10 Coahulla Creek on Friday and facing a Ray Gutierrez-coached North Cobb Christian on Saturday at home.

**No. 6 Lady Panthers 37, No. 8 Sonoraville 50** - Union County grabbed an early 9-1 lead and took a 13-8 edge into the second quarter when the Phoenix used an 11-0 run to take control.

"We got off to a good start but then we hit a wall," Nelson said. "[Sonoraville's] defense was really solid and we had a hard time getting the ball where we needed it to go."

The Lady Panthers ral-



Senior three-year starter Katelyn Brown injured her hip after taking a fall while battling for a rebound during the early stages of the third quarter vs. Sonoraville. Photo/Todd Forrest

lied to within 21-19 at the break, but Brown left with an injury to begin the third -- landing hard after going up for a rebound on Sonoraville's first possession of the half.

The Phoenix quickly capitalized and built a 29-21 advantage that eventually grew to 41-30 early in the fourth.

"This region is a lot more physical than the previous one, we saw that when we went to Murray County in the playoffs the last two years," Nelson said. "It's just taking some time to get used to that, but once we do, we're going to be much better."

Senior Hope Taylor scored a team-high 10 points; Ariel McCarter and Regan

Trlica scored 7 points apiece; Brown had 6 points and Aubrie Akins added five.

Once again, the Lady Panthers came out of the gates strong, beginning with buckets by Trlica and Taylor and two Brown free throws for a 6-1 edge. Later, Trlica hit from long distance near the 4-minute mark to spot Union County a 9-1 lead.

Following five unanswered by Sonoraville, Taylor's low-post bucket pushed the Lady Panthers' lead to 11-6. Brown closed out the first by chasing down a loose ball and scoring in the paint for a 13-8 score.

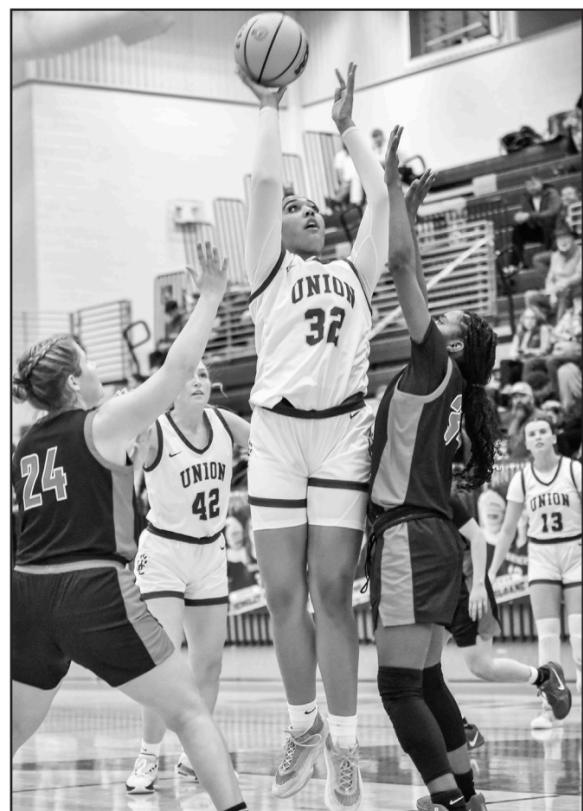
Trlica picked up her second foul with 1.8 seconds

remaining in the first, sending her to the bench to open a second period that saw the Phoenix take control via 11 straight points.

Taylor halted the run and delivered Union its first points of the second with 3:25 on the clock. Brown's basket had the Lady Panthers within two 30 seconds later.

Union missed six consecutive free throws over the final 2:30 of the half but still climbed within 21-19 when Taylor scored with 23 seconds on the clock.

Following Brown's departure less than 30 seconds into the third, Akins knocked down a 12-footer to tie the game at 21-21, but Sonoraville



Senior Hope Taylor scored a team-high 10 points in No. 6 Union County's loss to No. 8 Sonoraville. Photo/Todd Forrest

answered with an 8-0 run that Union didn't recover from.

"We made a little run and started doing what we needed to do, but when Katelyn went down, that threw a wrench into our system," Nelson said.

McCarter and Trlica kept Union within striking distance at 37-30 early in the fourth, but led by a defense that had the Lady Panthers out of sync all night, Sonoraville extended its margin to 41-30.

In one final push, Taylor and McCarter narrowed the gap to 43-36 at the 3:09 mark, but the Phoenix continued to take advantage of Union turnovers, putting the game away at 48-36 with 2:20 remaining.

**Lakeview 64, Union County 33** - The Lions stormed in front 17-6 after a quarter in Saturday's Wood Elite Classic at Etowah High.

Lakeview continued pulling away, leading 30-10 at the break and 47-23 through three.

Trlica led the Lady Panthers with 12 points; Akins had 9 points; Taylor scored seven; Dyer had three and Tatum Fisher added 2 points.

**Up next:** Union County hosts 1-6 LFO at 6 p.m. on Tuesday before hitting the road to face No. 10 Coahulla Creek (3-1) at 7 p.m. Friday.

The week concludes Saturday at 3 p.m. with North Cobb Christian (4-2) at home.



Senior Aubrie Akins had 9 points vs. Lakeview and 5 vs. Sonoraville. Photo/Todd Forrest



Coach Nelson looks on as sophomore Regan Trlica advances up the floor vs. Sonoraville. Photo/Todd Forrest