

# Sports

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## Basketball: Union County survives a pair of thrillers in Hiawassee

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Friday night's varsity contests between Union County and Towns County (3-4) each went down to the wire, featuring a pair of frantic comebacks in the final minutes that ended in two narrow Union victories.

The Lady Panthers (4-5) withstood a late push from 8th-ranked Towns County, escaping with a 50-46 win despite holding a 48-39 advantage with under 3:30 to play. The Lady Indians' defense sparked the late surge, trimming the deficit to 48-46 before their offense went scoreless over the final 76 seconds.

In the finale, the Union men all but erased an early 26-15 margin before the break, but a cold-shooting third frame saw Towns County extend its lead to 43-35 entering the fourth. Like the girls' game, pressure defense quickly tightened things up as Union pushed ahead 48-47 at the 2:50 mark, eventually hanging on 54-53 when Zane Floyd's jumper rattled out as time expired.

### Lady Panthers 50, No. 8 Towns County 46

The Lady Panthers found a lid on the basket down the stretch, going without a field goal over the final 4-plus minutes of Friday's road win. However, after moving within 48-46 at the 1:16 mark, Towns County encountered its own offensive issues, failing to convert on its last four possessions, including two turnovers.

Trailing 48-39, the Lady Indians' fourth-quarter surge began with 3:24 remaining when sophomore Megan Beaver hit 1 of 2 at the foul line, then scored on a putback 24 seconds later. Senior Sarah Shook swiped the ensuing inbounds pass and scored in the lane, trimming the Union advantage to 48-44.

Following a 96-second scoreless stretch by both squads that included an 0-for-2 trip to the line by Union sophomore Ariel McCarter, Beaver scored via a backdoor layup resulting in a one-score game with 1:16 to play.

Towns County couldn't convert a breakaway layup following a Union turnover, but the Lady Indians quickly forced a jump ball to regain possession at the 1-minute mark. Towns failed to get a shot up, handing the ball back to Union when McCarter collected an errant pass out of a timeout.

Following a Union County double-dribble, the Lady Indians coughed up the basketball when sophomore Katelyn Brown deflected a pass into the hands of Lara Turner, who drew a quick foul with 26 seconds left. The foul misfired on the front end of the 1-and-1 but Brown secured the offensive board and kicked it out to the perimeter, where a Lady Panthers' pass sailed out of bounds eight seconds later.

Towns County took a timeout at midcourt with 13.6 seconds left, setting up one final shot. Out of the stoppage, the Lady Indians immediately went on the attack, but junior Brelan Sieveking's runner in the lane bounced off the back of the rim and into the hands of Brown.

"Our defense stopped talking to each other for a little bit at Towns County, but they came together and that's what got us the win," Union County head coach Brad Cochran said.

Union County senior Corinne Hill sank both of her attempts from the charity stripe with 3.6 seconds left, putting the game out of reach at 50-46.

McCarter finished with a game-high 23 points to go with six boards, two assists and a pair of steals. Senior Tabitha Barnes



Freshman Cade Dockrey scores the Panthers' go-ahead basket during the final minute at Towns County. Photo/Todd Forrest

and Sieveking led the Lady Indians with 12 points each, while Shook had 11 points.

Turner added 12 points, six rebounds and a game-high six steals. Hill had 6 points and a team-high three assists. Juniors Morgan Warren and Kamryn Mull chipped in 4 points and 3 points, respectively. Brown ended her night with 2 points and five boards.

Beavers finished with 7 points for Towns County. Juniors Emma Lallement and Laura Mauldin had 2 points apiece.

Union began the evening with early leads of 6-0 and 10-5 courtesy of 3-pointers from McCarter and Mull. But Towns County answered with three Barnes treys and another by Sieveking during a five-minute stretch, resulting in a 20-15 second-quarter advantage.

The Lady Indians continued scoring at will, opening up leads of 26-17 and 28-19 before McCarter's 3-point play resulted in a 28-22 half-time tally.

"We came out thinking we could [play zone defense] even though we knew [Towns] shoots it better on their home court," Cochran said. "Early on, it was just their night and we had to adjust, but then we went back to [the zone] and it worked in our favor then."

The Lady Panthers started the second half with another 6-0 spurt, tying the score at 28-28. Union County raced ahead 33-30 moments later, capping a stretch that saw McCarter score seven straight Union points, but Barnes' fourth triple knotted things back up with 3:17 left in the quarter.

Hill and McCarter converted on back-to-back trips inside two minutes but Sieveking answered from the top of the circle to keep the Lady Indians within a point at 37-36. Turner and Brown tacked on a pair of Union buckets over the final 38 seconds to close the period up 41-36.

McCarter and Turner extended Union's advantage to 45-36 at the fourth quarter's 5:30 mark until Beaver found Shook open on the perimeter for 3 points. McCarter split two free throws and Turner connected on a mid-range jumper to mount a 48-39 lead with 4:12 left.

**Team stats:** Union County hit 34% from the floor on 20-of-59 shooting. The Lady Indians went 18 of 54 (33%) overall and hit 1/3 of their shots across the board, going 7 of 21 (33%) from

3-point range and 3 for 9 (33%) at the charity stripe. The Lady Panthers sank 4 of 19 (21%) from deep and 6 of 11 (55%) at the line.

The rebounding battle was nearly even as Union collected 38 boards (14 offensive) and Towns County hauled in 36 (11 offensive). The Lady Panthers held a 24-18 scoring edge in the paint and a 22-6 margin on points off turnovers -- committing 16 while forcing Towns into 21.

**Panthers 54, Towns County 53** - The Panthers rallied to force a season split between the two scheduled matchups of the rivalry's annual border war, setting up a potential rubber match in the Battle of the States Christmas Tournament later this month.

"Towns County's defense offers a different kind of challenge than anything I've ever coached against," Union County head coach Corey Garrett said. "It's really difficult to figure out that defense. It's very tricky."

"I knew we would shoot better than the [first meeting] and that we were going to score a lot more than 29 points. I basically told the guys that we would win the game, so it's glad we were able to go out there and do it."

Trailing 43-35 to begin the fourth, Union County turned to a full-court pressure defense that resulted in a 7-0 run to start the quarter. Two free throws from sophomore Hayden Hughes and a layup by junior Braylen Rader, courtesy of an Indians turnover, ignited the Union comeback.

"The press wasn't something we planned on doing due to our [lack of depth]," Garrett said. "We started pressing a little during region play last year and the plan was to save it for region this year, so it was something we haven't worked on. But I knew the guys we had on the floor at the time were the guys that could do it."

"We needed a spark and it just happened to work. Another thing was, we couldn't keep [Towns] off the offensive glass, so I figured if we can't control the boards we better start creating turnovers."

On the ensuing Towns County trip up the floor, Union senior Eli Underwood intercepted a sideline pass and fed Ellis for a layup plus the foul with 6:15 remaining.

Clinging to a 43-42 lead, the Indians coughed up the ball once again but forced a Union



Sophomore Katelyn Brown came up with a critical steal and two big rebounds to help Union hang on at Towns. Photo/Todd Forrest

County miss that allowed junior Tanner Cunningham to slow the bleeding at 45-42 with a bucket in the paint. On Towns' next possession, Floyd found junior Connor Chastain under the basket for a layup and a 47-42 edge near the 5-minute mark.

Ellis fired back with a pull-up from 17 feet and Underwood dropped in a baby hook with 3:10 left, narrowing the margin back to a point at 47-46. The Panthers continued applying pressure and Underwood came up with another steal near the home bench, resulting in Union's first second-half lead when Hughes' layup fell through the net.

"Whenever Eli is playing at the back of our press, I keep telling him he needs to 'live a little bit back there,'" Garrett said. "He was a little timid last year and I've been trying to get him to take some chances and go for those steals. So that was really cool to see him ramp it up."

With his team reeling, Floyd drilled a 20-footer from the left wing to move the Indians back in front 50-48 with 2:25 remaining. But Union County went back to its leading scorer and Ellis hit two free throws after drawing contact on the dribble drive.

The Panthers went up 52-50 when Cade Dockrey's steal near halfcourt led to a run-out and a layup for the freshman. Once again Towns County answered, quickly breaking the Union County press where Floyd's penetration attracted three defenders, resulting in a kick out to Cunningham for a trey that put the Indians back on top 53-52 just shy of the 1-minute mark.

After a Union miss bounced out of bounds off Towns County, Dockrey went on the attack, dropping in a one-handed floater in the paint.

After the game, Dockrey credited the coaching staff for never losing faith in their young freshman.

"Coach [Garrett] tells me to keep shooting, so I guess his confidence in me paid off because I was able to get a couple shots to go in tonight," Dockrey said.

Following a timeout, Towns couldn't connect from 15 feet, sending Hughes to the free-throw line with 15 seconds on the clock. Following a miss on the front end, Hughes gathered his own shot and kicked out to sophomore Houston Henry, who quickly drew a foul.

those things, they worked out."

Floyd's night ended with a team-high 12 points. His eight rebounds and four assists were both game-highs. Cunningham matched his fellow junior with a half-dozen while pulling down three boards.

Ellis poured in game-highs of 23 points and three steals, giving the Union guard three-straight games of 20-plus points. Henry added 12 points and six boards, Hughes had 9 points and Underwood matched Floyd's game-high of eight boards. The senior post also chipped in 2 points and a pair of steals.

Dockrey had 6 points, two rebounds and two assists. Rader and sophomore Maddox Young had 2 points apiece.

Towns County's Julian Mosely ended with 8 points and six boards. Rogers added 7 points and four rebounds, while Chastain went for 6 points and four rebounds. Grant Ingram scored 6 points and Jon Dockery finished with 2 points.

During a see-saw affair early, Union held leads of 3-0 and 7-4 before Towns peeled off seven straight on the heels of a Rogers trey. Union responded with five-in-a-row, capped by an Ellis trey to regain its first-half lead at 12-11.

Cunningham rattled home a triple that sparked a 15-3 Indians run and put Union in a 26-15 hole. Henry answered with five-straight points, Hughes scored inside, then Ellis recorded his team's final 7 points of the half, slicing the Panthers' halftime deficit to 32-29.

Towns began the third with buckets from Mosely and Dockery to mount a 36-29 advantage, en route to an 11-6 period that awarded the home team a 43-35 lead at quarter's end.

**Team stats:** Towns County hit 43% (23 for 53) of its field goals, connecting on 6 of 17 from long distance and 1 of 2 (50%) at the line. Union made 39% (19 of 49) of its attempts, going 6 of 18 (33%) from downtown and 11 for 17 (65%) at the line.

The Indians out-rebounded the visitors 33-25 overall and held a 12-11 edge on the offensive glass. Points in the paint went to Towns County 28-24, but the Panthers forced 17 turnovers compared to only 12 giveaways, resulting in an 18-12 points-off-turnovers advantage.

Union County is off Tuesday before meeting another rival on Friday when they host Fanning County. The Panthers close the week with a Saturday trip to Murphy, North Carolina.

Both teams will then begin preparation for the 2022 Battle of the States, where Union faces Polk County, Tennessee.



Jude Ellis' 3-point play caps Union's 7-0 run to begin the fourth. Ellis is averaging 21.2 points over his last four games. Photo/Todd Forrest

# UCHS honors senior wrestlers, finishes second at Friday Night Fights



Union County wrestling seniors. (L-R): Colson Lotts, Huck Whisenhunt, coach Justin Byers, Shelby Agacinski and Damon Wallace. The Panthers came in second place to Fannin County at the UCHS gymnasium on Friday night. The Panthers defeated Murphy, NC and Franklin, NC. Union returns to action on Tuesday when they visit Fannin County for a duals match with Chestatee at 5 p.m. Photo/Jeremy Foster



Senior manager Avary Smith-Foot (center) with family. Photo/Jeremy Foster

# Basketball: Union sweeps Murphy, drops two Saturday games at Lakeview

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Along with its four-game sweep at Towns County, Union County rallied to pick up a pair of Tuesday, Dec. 6 wins over Murphy, North Carolina, before surrendering two second-half leads at Lakeview Academy over the weekend.

The Panthers enter their final week of action ahead of the Christmas break with a Friday home meeting vs. Fannin County and a Saturday trip to Murphy.

**Lady Panthers 57, Murphy 35** - Union County stormed back from a 21-11 second-quarter deficit to outscore the Bulldogs 46-14 the rest of the way.

The Lady Panthers closed the first half with a 16-0 run, then scored the first 3 points of the third quarter to mount a 30-21 advantage.

After Murphy cut the deficit to 30-27, Union outscored the visitors 10-2 to take a 40-29 lead into the fourth. The Bulldogs opened the fourth with a basket, but the Lady Panthers used a 16-4 finish to put the game away.

Senior Corinne Hill led the way with a career-best 15 points and a game-high five steals on 6-for-10 shooting. Sophomore Ariel McCarter ended with a 13-point, 10-rebound double-double; junior Lara Turner had 13 points, nine boards and three steals.

Sophomore Katelyn Brown pulled down a season-high 10 rebounds to go with 6 points. Junior Kamryn Mull had 5 points and two steals, while sophomore Aubrie Akins and senior Ivie Chapman added 2 points apiece. Freshman Paula Robertson collected five rebounds and one free throw.

Addie Johnson was Murphy's only player in double figures with 11 points.

**Team stats:** Union hit 38% (23 for 61) from the floor compared to Murphy's 31% (13 for 42). From 3-point territory, the Lady Panthers went 3 for 16 (19%) and Murphy made 4 of 15 (27%). Union County hit 8 of 22 (36%) at the line and the Bulldogs made 5 of 9 (56%).

The Lady Panthers controlled the boards 47-25, holding a 21-3 advantage on the offensive glass and a 30-16 points margin in the paint. Second-chance points went to Union 30-16 while the Panthers forced 22 turnovers compared to 14 giveaways. Points off turnovers went to the home team at a 23-7 clip.

**Panthers 75, Murphy 57** - Union County outscored the Bulldogs 45-25 after halftime to erase a 32-30 halftime deficit behind a career-high 25 points from sophomore Jude Ellis.

Senior Eli Underwood ended with 20 points and 17 rebounds and Houston Henry had a career-high 16 points and 7 assists in the win.

Trailing 16-14 after one, the Panthers stumbled early in the second dropping Union into a 31-20 hole before storming back to within two at the break. Murphy outscored the home team 7-2 to begin the third when the Panthers raced ahead to stay at 51-45 at quarter's end via a 19-7 outburst.

Union County doubled up the Bulldogs 24-12 in the fourth quarter, scoring the game's last 10 points due to some late extracurricular activities courtesy of the visitors once the contest was out of reach.

The Bulldogs were hit with a pair of late technical fouls, allowing Union to turn a solid 67-57 win into a 75-57 runaway.

Freshman Cade Dockrey scored 6 points for the Panthers, sophomore Hayden Hughes added five and sophomore Maddox Young had 3 points and two assists.

Will Carringer led Murphy with 12 points.

**Team stats:** Union County made 27 of 48 (47%) from the floor, 5 for 23 (21%) behind the arc and 16 of 24 (67%) at the line. The Bulldogs cooled off following a hot start, going 24 for 52 (46%) from the floor, 5 of 13 (39%) from three and 4 of 6 (67%) at the line.

Union out-rebounded Murphy 32-31, but the Bulldogs maintained a 38-36 points-in-the-paint edge. Second-chance points were even at 16-16 and Union won the points-off-turnovers category 14-6, forcing 17 turnovers to 11 of its own.

**Lady Panthers 49, Lakeview 54 (OT)** - For the second straight game, Union County went cold down the stretch, but unlike Friday night, they couldn't hold on in a thrilling non-region road contest.

The Lady Panthers led most of the way after falling into an early 11-6 deficit. Union stormed back for an 18-15 lead after one and 32-27 at halftime.

Despite a low-scoring third, the Lady Panthers took a 39-37 advantage into the fourth where Lakeview finally overtook the visitors at 43-41 with 4:54 remaining.

McCarter knocked down a jumper with 5:52 left to break a 39-39 tie, but it turned out to be Union's final basket outside the paint and one of only three field goals over the final 13-plus minutes.

With Union looking up at a 43-41 deficit, Akins hit two free throws at the 4:34 mark, but both squads struggled down the stretch and Lakeview nursed a 45-43 edge with under a minute left.

Turner knocked down a short jumper with 22 seconds left, allowing Union to force overtime at 45-45. However, the extra session was all Lakeview, and the home team built a quick 49-45 advantage less than 30 seconds into OT.

McCarter kept Union within three, splitting two free throws near the 3-minute mark and scoring via a dribble drive inside of two minutes. With 22 seconds left, Lakeview put the game away with two free throws that pushed its lead to 53-48. Turner made 1-of-2 with 11 seconds left and Lakeview split two at the line for a 54-49 final.

McCarter finished with team-highs of 14 points, three assists and three steals. Hill had 10 points and matched McCarter's team-leading three steals. Mull ended with 9 points; Turner had 7 points and five rebounds; Brown added 4 points and seven boards.

Akins' night ended with 4 points and three rebounds. Junior Morgan Warren had five rebounds and a free throw.

Dynesty Putnam led Lakeview with 17 points, three assists and three steals.

**Team stats:** Lakeview hit 35% from the floor on 19 of 55 shooting. Union County made 20 of 60 for 33% overall, 1 of 12 (8%) from long distance and 8 for 21 (38%) at the line. The Lions went 0 for 5 from deep and 17 of 24 at the line (70%).

Lakeview out-rebounded Union 43-35 and outscored the visitors 28-20 in the paint. Second-chance points went to the Lady Panthers by a 16-10 margin. Union forced 19 turnovers and coughed it up 16 times, while holding a 17-13 advantage in points-off-turnovers.

Union was also without the services of injured senior Ivie Chapman for the second straight game. Fortunately, Chapman should return ahead of the weekend.

**Panthers 50, Lakeview 58** - The Lions' offense heated up during the second half and Union County couldn't keep pace on Saturday afternoon in Gainesville.

With three minutes left in the third, the Panthers held a 33-28 advantage when the Lions raced ahead for good with a 10-0 run. During the quarter's final seconds, Union County halted the run with two Hughes free throws, but Lakeview beat the buzzer on the other end with an acrobatic putback to push its lead back to five at 40-35.

Ellis answered a Lions' trey to begin the fourth, but a traditional 3-point play extended Union's deficit to 45-38. Underwood scored twice inside and Dockrey connected from long range to move the Panthers within four at 50-46 with 3:30 left. Underwood answered another Lakeview bucket at the 3-minute mark, but Union County struggled to get stops the rest of the way.

Ellis finished with 14 points on 2 of 4 shooting from deep. Underwood had 11 points and 11 rebounds; Hughes added 11 points and three boards.

Dockrey scored a career-high 8 points with five boards and two steals. Henry had 4 points, 2 assists and a pair of steals.

Lakeview's Brock Graham and Justyce Sadler had 14 each.

**Team stats:** Lakeview shot 45% from the floor on 22 for 49. The Lions went 9 of 26 (35%) from deep and 5 for 10 (50%) at the line. Union County made 19 of 53 (36%) from the field, 6 for 21 (29%) from deep and 6 of 9 (67%) at the line.

Despite starting the game 8 for 28, Lakeview hit 14 of 21 (67%) during the second half.

Lakeview out-rebounded Union 34-29 overall, but the Panthers held an 11-10 edge on the offensive boards. Union owned a 17-12 advantage on second-chance points, but Lakeview outscored Union 24-20 in the paint.

The Panthers turned it over 13 times while forcing 17 on the defensive end. Union won the points-off-turnovers battle 13-9.

# Swimming: UCHS girls' relay team sets school record at Murphy, NC meet

## CANDY CANE MEET HIGHLIGHTS

December 10th Meet @ Murphy

### 200 Medley Relay

Girls A: 3rd  
Boys A: 5th  
Girls B: 7th

### 200 IM

Sophia Licavoli: 3rd

### 100 Breaststroke

Lily Helton: 2nd

### 50 Freestyle

Nicholas Nushtayev: 2nd  
Lily Helton: 4th  
Courtney Foster: 6th

## OVERALL

3RD PLACE COMBINED

### 200 Free Relay

Boys A: 2nd  
Girls A: 6th

### 100 Fly

Eli Gwynn: 2nd  
Reese Jones: 5th

### 100 Backstroke

Courtney Foster: 3rd



### 100 Freestyle

Lilly Collins: 8th

### 200 Freestyle

Nicholas Nushtayev: 1st  
Eli Gwynn: 3rd  
Reese Jones: 4th  
Delilah Hernandez: 7th

### 400 Free Relay

Courtney Foster, Lilly Collins, Reese Jones & Lily Helton: 2nd  
\*New UCHS Record



Top: UCHS' record-breaking girls relay team. Bottom: The UCMS squad at last week's meet.