

Hot-shooting Rebels storm back from 19-down in 50-49 win over Union

Chambers and Hunter combine for 34 points in 58-47 loss to Lady Rebels

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Blue Ridge - In the only action of the week, Union County suffered a pair of losses at Fannin County, despite a game-changing run in each contest that erased a 13-point deficit in the girls' game and sparked a 19-point advantage for the Union men.

Lady Panthers 47, Fannin County 58 - Union County (1-3) fell behind 20-7 in the opening frame before a 13-0 run tied the score at the midway point of the second.

The Lady Panthers eventually built a 30-26 third-quarter lead thanks to a 23-6 surge that saw junior Rebekah Chambers account for 12 of her team's first 28 points.

At the end of the day, the Union County frontcourt duo of Chambers and Ava Hunter combined for 34 points, with Hunter pouring in a team-high 18 points - 13 in the second half.

Chambers and Hunter started the scoring for the Lady Panthers with one basket apiece, plus two free throws by Chambers during the first five minutes. However, Fannin County (6-2) was lights out from beyond the arc in the early going, connecting on three treys in the first period to build a 20-7 lead.

A Hunter free throw made it 20-8 after one while sparking 13-unanswered from the visitors. A 3-point play by Chambers pulled Union within single digits just seven seconds into the second frame. Then, a Hunter put-back was followed by another and-one by Chambers, trimming the margin to 20-16.

The Lady Panthers drew even at 20-20 when sophomore Corinne Hill drained a mid-range jumper and junior Ansley Collins drove the baseline.

Fannin, who momentarily cooled off from long distance, ended a six-minute-plus scoring drought with a triple at the 3:32 mark of the second. But Union scored the final points of the half when a Lara Turner lay-up was the end result of a perfectly-executed press break by the Lady Panthers.

Union outscored Fannin 14-2 in the second quarter as Chambers entered the half with a team-high 10 points, followed by five from Hunter.

The Lady Rebels struck first in the third when they grabbed an offensive board and were fouled on the ensuing bucket, resulting in a 3-point play and a 26-22 lead. But the Lady Panthers responded with eight-straight to cap off the 23-6 run that originated in the final seconds of the opening frame.

The 8-0 stretch began when Hunter went to work down low for two; then Turner evened the score with a steal under the Fannin basket as Union applied some full-court pressure. Chambers showcased her range with a 15-footer from the wing - giving her team its first lead of the day. The Union County advantage swelled to 30-26 when Turner sank a jumper from the corner with 5:11 left in the third.

Unfortunately, Fannin County responded with a 14-2 run for a 40-32 lead at the 1:19 mark of the period. Two Lady Rebels free throws tied the score at 30-30, just shy of the 3-minute mark before Hunter put Union back in front one final time, scoring via an offensive board. Trailing 32-30, Fannin rattled off 10-straight, ignited by a trey and 3-for-4 shooting on consecutive visits to the charity stripe.

Sophomore Ellie Cook stemmed the Lady Rebel surge with a jumper and Hunter split a pair of free throws to stay within seven after three quarters. Hunter began the fourth with an and-one for a 42-38 Fannin County lead, but a fast-break lay-up and another Lady Rebels trey pushed the difference out to 49-40. Consecutive inside buckets by Chambers kept Union within two possessions at the 5:30 mark, but Fannin responded with back-to-back triples to take control at 55-44.

Hunter converted a 3-point play with 4:27 to play, but the Lady Panthers wouldn't score again, and Fannin put the game away 90 seconds later with its fourth-straight 3-ball to close out a 58-47 victory.

The freshman Turner finished with 6 points; Cook added three; Collins and Hill rounded out the Union County scoring with two each.

Class A Private's 10th-ranked Tallulah Falls and Class AAA White County



Junior Ava Hunter led Union County with 18 points in a physical rivalry game at Fannin County on Saturday afternoon. Photo/Todd Forrest

were scheduled to visit Union County earlier in the week but backed out due to COVID-19. This week's lone contest was also canceled - a visit to Gilmer on Thursday.

Union County is tentatively scheduled to host Class AAA North Hall at 6 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 21.

Fannin County 50, Union County 49 - The Panthers (0-4) jumped out to an early 19-0 lead with three minutes left in the first quarter, but less than four minutes later, Fannin (3-2) rallied to even the score at 20-20.

Despite two offensive explosions in the first nine minutes, the rest of the contest was a see-saw battle that ended with Union's potential game-winner falling short as the buzzer sounded. Leading 46-43 with 6:52 remaining, the Panthers surrendered five-straight points but junior guard Caleb John turned a steal on the defensive end into the equalizer on the other end at the 3:48 mark.

The Rebels regained the lead 50-48 on the ensuing possession, but Hemphill split two free throws to pull Union within a point as the clock approached two minutes.

Still trailing 50-49 with 50 seconds remaining, the Panthers were whistled for an extremely ticky-tack three-second violation. And after Union could not force a turnover, there was some confusion regarding which player was supposed to commit the clock-stopping foul, sending Fannin to the line with only six seconds to play.

The Rebels missed the front-end of the 1-and-1 and Hemphill pulled down the board, then quickly turned and fired to John, who raced down the sideline. As he passed the Union bench, head coach Corey Garrett called a timeout with 2.4 seconds left to set up one final play.

With John inbounding uncontested from in front of his Panthers teammates, neither Landon Cox or Lake Hughes could shake their defender, resulting in a forced pass to a blanketed Daniel Snow at the elbow. Snow, falling away against a taller defender, came up short on a turn-around baby-hook from the high post.

Hughes led Union County with a season-high 13 points to go with 5 rebounds and 2 steals. Hemphill also turned in a season-high with 9 points and 8 boards. Additionally, the Panthers were +8 with Hemphill on the court.

John, Landon Kight and Eli Underwood scored 6 points each, with Kight fouling out and John battling foul trouble. Union County was +13 with John on the floor. The junior guard also shot 3-for-3 from the floor and dished out a team-high 3 assists.

Kight added 5 boards and 2 dimes; Underwood had 6 rebounds, one steal and finished with a +3 plus/minus.

Hemphill scored 6 of Union's first 12 points while Hughes and Kight knocked down a 3 during the 19-0 run. Kight also went 1-for-2 at the line when the Fannin coach received a technical foul less than three minutes into the contest.

John added four points to the early outburst, hitting a short jumper then driving to the hoop to cap the 19-0 start. Later, Underwood split a pair at the charity stripe to round out Union's first-quarter scoring.

The Rebels heated up from downtown, sinking four treys with a steal-and-score

sandwiched in between. Trailing 20-14 after one, Fannin started the second frame with two triples in 44 seconds to knot the game at 20-20.

Junior Keyton Chitwood slowed the bleeding with a put-back - Union County's first field goal in nearly 5 1/2 minutes - but the Rebels scored four straight, including 2-of-3 at the line after drawing a foul behind the arc.

Hughes hit a pair of free throws to tie the game at 24-24 but Fannin County quickly pushed its margin to 28-24 at the 2:55 mark, closing out a 28-5 run.

A Hughes trey sparked a 6-0 Union County spurt to end the first half up 30-28. The Panthers' six-unanswered included a Cox lay-up off a turnover and a Hemphill free throw.



Junior Rebekah Chambers puts the finishing touches on a Lady Panthers' fast break with a lay-in at Fannin. Photo/Todd Forrest

Union extended its lead to 33-29 early in the third when Austin Taylor followed a Rebels' free throw with a 3-pointer from the wing. But a Fannin County trey punctuated five-straight points for a 34-33 Rebels' advantage.

Underwood responded with five-straight all by himself - beginning with a corner-3 and followed by a back-door lay-up via Cox's dribble-drive assist.

Fannin pulled within a point but Hughes connected from the corner to keep Union in front at 41-37. Another Rebels' 3 kept the margin at one before Hemphill closed the period with a 1-for-2 visit to the line.

Fannin started the fourth by sinking 3-of-4 at the charity stripe, but Kight put his squad back in front with an offensive

board and Cox pushed Union ahead 46-43 with another steal-and-score.

The Rebels put back an air-ball to pull within one before returning to their bread and butter - sinking a triple for a 48-46 advantage at the midway point of the fourth.

Union's final field goal came via a floater in the lane by John, courtesy of a Fannin turnover, tying the score one final time at 48-48 until Fannin went up for good, 50-48 with 3:09 left.

The fourth quarter saw five lead changes and two ties but the Panthers could not force the crucial sixth and final lead change despite Fannin going scoreless over the final 3:09.

Cox finished with 4 points and 3 rebounds, Taylor had 3 points and one assist,



Lake Hughes



Kaston Hemphill

Chitwood added 2 points in 5 minutes. Fannin County shot 9-for-19 from long distance and 17-for-34 overall but struggled at the line, hitting just 7 of 17.

Union County will host North Hall on Monday, Dec. 21.

NASCAR 2020

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Janet Guthrie: A Life at Full Throttle

Old-time NASCAR fans will remember 1977 as the year when Janet Guthrie became the first woman to qualify for the Daytona 500.

But there are many other aspects of her career unknown to most racing fans that brings her to the forefront of the automobile racing. Remarkably, she was only following her heart, or passion, as she calls it.

"It was very clear that in 1972, I was having a big midlife crisis," said Guthrie.

Guthrie had been racing for nine years, but in 1972, she quit a well-paying and secure job with an Aerospace company to go racing. To support herself, she relied on a series of odd jobs.

What made her do this? "Passion is what life is about," she continues. "I wanted to be where my passion was, and racing is where I found it."

To understand why a woman would act as Guthrie did, you must first look into her early life.

Before becoming the first woman ever to compete in the Indianapolis 500 and the Daytona 500, Guthrie had a diversified background. By the time she was 16, she had her pilot's license and was an accomplished parachute jumper.

"I was born adventurous," she said.

She was born in Iowa City, Iowa, on March 7, 1938. Her family moved to Miami, Florida when she was three. She attended Miss Harris' Florida School for Girls for all but one of her elementary through high-school years, and then graduated from the University of Michigan in 1960 with a B.S. in physics.

She went on to become a pilot and flight instructor, an aerospace engineer, a technical editor, and a public representative for some of the country's major corporations.

She joined Republic Aviation in Farmingdale, New York, as a research and development engineer, working on programs that were precursors to Project Apollo. In 1964, she applied for the first Scientist-Astronaut program, and got through the first round of eliminations. She treasures a letter from astronaut Deke Slayton, a memento of that attempt.

Her first racing experience came in a Jaguar XK 120 coupe in Sports Car Club of America races. Her career in physics slowly yielded to the allure of sports car racing, and by 1972 she was involved in racing on a full-time basis. Along the way, she posted two class victories in the 12 Hours of Sebring.

She had 13 years of experience on sports car road-racing circuits, building and maintaining her own race cars, before being invited to test a car for



Janet Guthrie in 1978

Indianapolis.

"I tested and qualified one of A.J. Foyt's cars for the 1976 Indianapolis 500, and I made the field," she said. "But come race day, A.J. decided to put a man in the car, and I no longer had a ride."

Even though she didn't get to race at Indy that year, the fact that she made the field was headline news coverage throughout the county. Her name was even overshadowing what was happening with NASCAR at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

"Humpy" (Wheeler) was agitated that I was taking away press coverage from the World 600," continued Guthrie. "A friend of mine worked at the speedway and she told a lady named, Linda Ferreri, who in turn bought a car for me to drive."

In 1977, she became the first woman to qualify for and compete in the Indianapolis 500; she was also the first woman and top rookie at the Daytona 500 in the same year. She finished ninth in the Indianapolis 500 in 1978.

"She was right up there with the best of the men," said Bobby Allison.

After competing in 31 NASCAR races between 1976-78, Guthrie couldn't get a ride and was forced to sit out the 1979 season. She returned for two final starts in 1980, including being Dale Earnhardt's teammate in that year's Daytona 500. He finished fourth, she was 11th.

The reason for her departure was perhaps the one element Guthrie ultimately had most in common with countless male race car drivers over the

years - lack of sponsorship.

She failed to get even one overture from other teams, including small, underfunded operations.

"Oh, it was a really terrible period of time," Guthrie said. "I mean, '78, '79, '80, '81, '82, '83, all those years I spent every living moment attempting to find backing to continue racing at the top levels."

"Finally, in 1983 I realized that if I kept it up, I was going to jump out of a high window. That was when I quit doing that and started working on a book."

"I was very disappointed that I was unable to race more. I wasn't able to get sponsors and it was either quit or jump out a window, that's how much passion I felt for the sport."

Janet Guthrie's helmet and driver's suit are in the Smithsonian Institution, and she was one of the first athletes named to the Women's Sports Hall of Fame.

The 82-year-old Guthrie continues to live in Aspen, Colorado. While she keeps up with racing by watching it on TV, she doesn't attend many races.

DAYTONA 500 TO ALLOW FANS

The 63rd Annual Daytona 500 will play host to a limited number of fans.

The reduced venue capacity for the 2021 NASCAR Cup Series opener, set for Sunday Feb. 14, as well as all events part of Daytona Speedweeks (Feb. 9-14), is due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and is in accordance with enhanced safety protocols and procedures to provide a safe environment for guests, NASCAR competitors, employees and the local

community.

"The Daytona 500 is one of the greatest spectacles in all of sports, and fans from all over the world converge in Daytona Beach to be a part of motorsport's biggest day," said Daytona International Speedway President Chip Wile. "While we won't be able to have a capacity crowd here in February, we are excited that we can host the Daytona 500 with those in attendance, as well as for the millions who will tune in live on FOX."

As a result of the seating capacity limitations, the Speedway will work to accommodate guests who have already purchased tickets to the 2021 Daytona 500. To ensure social distancing between groups who will be in attendance, many fans will be reseated in new locations. The reseating process is expected to be complete by early January.

All guests will be screened before entering the facility and will be required to wear face coverings while maintaining six-foot social distancing throughout their visit.

NASCAR did not say how many fans would be allowed in the 100,000 seat stadium, but it is estimated about 15-20,000 will be tops.

Schedule: Tues., Feb. 9: 43rd Annual Busch Clash (Daytona Road Course under the lights), Wed., Feb. 10: DAYTONA 500 Qualifying, Thur., Feb. 11: Duel At Daytona qualifying races, Fri, Feb. 12: NextEra Energy 250 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race, Sat, Feb. 13: Xfinity Series and Lucas Oil 200 (ARCA Menards) doubleheader.

Racing Joke: Harry, an 80-year-old retired driver, went to see his doctor to get a physical.

A few days later, the doctor saw Harry walking down the street with a gorgeous young lady on his arm.

A few days later, on a return visit, the doctor spoke to Harry again, and said, "You're really doing great aren't you?"

Harry replied, "Just doing what you said, doctor: Get a hot mama and be cheerful."

The doctor responded, "I didn't say that. I said, you've got a heart murmur. Be careful."

Racing Trivia Daytona: What year was the first Daytona 500 run?

Last Week's Question: How many Cup Series races did Kyle Busch win in 2020? Answer: One. The October race at Texas.

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