

Sports

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Lady Panthers split the weekend's Region 8-AA contests

Union stunned at home by Monticello on the heels of an easy victory at Elbert

By Todd Forrest
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The Union County Lady Panthers opened region play with a decisive road victory at Elbert County on Friday night before suffering their first loss of the season to Monticello at home on Saturday afternoon.

Entering Saturday with a 3-5 record, the scrappy Lady Hurricanes outscored Union County 7-2 over the final two minutes to take a 43-41 victory.

"All season long we've slowed teams down with our 1-3-1 (zone defense) and then (Monticello) holds us to our lowest point total (of the season) using a 1-3-1, so go figure," Lady Panther Head Coach Corey Garrett said. "We just didn't have the energy tonight. (Monticello) had a long bus ride up here and they found their legs. We didn't."

Coming out of the break deadlocked at 17, the Lady Panthers seemed to take control with leads of 27-20, 30-23 and 32-25 during the latter stages of the third. But the foul trouble began to snowball for Union County after Andelin Hill picked up her fourth foul early in the second half. Adeline Dockrey was tagged with foul number four at the 1:24 mark of the third and Kyla Locklear was hit with her fourth personal a minute later.

With three key Lady Panthers on the bench, the Lady Canes closed the third with five unanswered to pull within a basket at 32-30. Forty-five seconds into the fourth, Monticello knotted the score at 32-32 but Kait McCarter responded with a deuce on the other end.

Brooke Dockrey answered another Lady Canes bucket to keep Union ahead 36-34 with 3:50 remaining.

Two Lady Cane free throws tied things up at the 3:41 mark until a 3-pointer from Hill gave Union County the upper hand at 39-36 with 2:58 to play.

It was all downhill from there. Following a pair of misses



L-R: Sophomore Kyla Locklear forces a jump ball on a Monticello shot attempt in the first half. Kait McCarter drives inside for two points during the second half of Saturday's loss to Monticello. The junior post kept the Lady Panthers afloat with her diverse offensive repertoire while the team battled foul trouble in the third quarter. Photos/Todd Forrest

by both teams, Monticello cut the margin to a point with a short jumper at the 2-minute mark.

A Union turnover led to a personal foul and a technical foul -- for disagreeing with the personal foul -- sending the Lady Canes to the stripe for four free throws and the ball.

After hitting 3-of-4 to take a 41-39 lead with 1:38 remaining, Monticello chewed 50 seconds off the clock before connecting on a backbreaker in the paint for a 43-39 edge.

A Lady Panther turnover awarded possession back to the visitors but two missed free throws allowed Union to pull within two on a Brooke Dockrey layup in the final seconds.

With 2.4 seconds to play, the Lady Panthers were unable to force the necessary turnover, allowing Monticello to steal a critical region road victory.

Brooke Dockrey would lead Union with 11 points to go with 6 rebounds and 3 assists.

McCarter and freshman Ava Hunter finished with 10 points and 8 rebounds apiece but the duo combined to go 0-for-5 at the line.

As a team, the Lady Pan-

thers finished a dismal 0-for-8 at the stripe -- only three attempts in the second half.

Meanwhile, the Lady Canes connected on 15-of-27 at the line. Their 27 free throws attempts made up for a 27-percent (13-for-49) shooting performance from the floor and 20-percent (2-for-10) from long distance.

Union County hit 18-of-49 (37-percent) from the floor and 5-of-18 (28-percent) from 3-point territory. The Lady Panthers also dominated the boards 43-to-26 overall and 12-to-7 on the offensive glass.

Attributing to Union's offensive woes was its lack of ball security as they tallied 18 giveaways -- compared to just seven turnovers for the Lady Hurricanes.

As for the rest of the Union County stat sheet, Hill wound up with 8 points, 4 boards, 2 assists and 2 steals.

Locklear added 2 points along with team-highs in rebounds (9) and blocked shots (2). Matching her blocked shot total was Adeline Dockrey, who also grabbed 4 boards.

Riley Allison and Brianna Hemphill pulled down one re-

bound each.

Lady Panthers 57, Elbert County 40 - The Lady Panthers opened Region 8-AA play with a convincing 17-point victory at Elbert County.

"We made some shots and had it clicking. It was a huge region win," Garrett said.

Hunter scored 14 points through three quarters as Union County put the game on ice with a 51-26 advantage entering the fourth. Hunter would finish with 16 points and a dozen boards. The freshman would also chip in 2 steals and a blocked shot.

Hill turned in an efficient 13-7-4 stat line on 4-of-7 shooting from the floor, 2-of-4 beyond the arc and 3-of-4 at the line. Her 13 points, 7 boards and 4 assists were good enough second on the team in each category.

Brooke Dockrey scored 11 points while dishing out 5 assists on 3-of-4 shooting. She also grabbed two boards and blocked two shots.

Kait McCarter went for 8 points and 7 boards while Adeline Dockrey had 4 points and 4 boards.

Allison recorded a career-high 5 rebounds while connecting



on 1-of-2 from 3-point range.

Locklear added 2 points and Hemphill hauled in 4 boards to round out the Lady Panther box score.

As a team, Union shot a season-high 48-percent on 20-of-42 despite missing 7-of-8 attempts in the fourth. Through three quarters, the Lady Panthers were a scorching 56-percent from the floor, hitting 19-of-34.

Union County would end up 5-of-15 (33-percent) from long distance and 12-of-24 at the line.

Once again, the Lady Panthers controlled the paint, outrebounding the Lady Devils 48-to-26 and winning the second chance points battle 17-to-6. Defensively, Union County harassed the home team into a 13-of-56 (23-percent) shooting night.

"We brought the energy on the defensive end and that helped us out on offense," Garrett said.

Turnovers were the only blemish on the ledger as the Lady Panthers gave the ball up 22 times while forcing just 9 takeaways on the other end.

On Monday, Union County visited Towns County for the third attempt at completing the season

series. Last week's contest was postponed when no zebras were available to officiate the games.

Region play resumes Tuesday when Social Circle visits for a 5 p.m. tip. The Lady Redskins were demolished by Monticello on Friday.

The final game before the Christmas break is Thursday when Murphy, NC pays a visit to Union County. Tip-off is scheduled for 6 p.m.

"Murphy lost a few players from last year so they'll be a different team," Garrett said. "They'll be more guard-heavy this year but they'll still be very good."

Battle of the States - Union County draws perhaps the toughest first round matchup in Hokes Bluff, AL, who has reached the BOTS title game three straight years -- winning two.

The last time they failed to reach the finals was 2014 when they fell to Union County, 57-27 in the opening round.

Tip-off is scheduled for 4 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 27. The Lady Panthers will play the winner/loser of Walhalla, SC and last year's champ, Murphy, NC on day two.

Panthers bounce back from ugly loss at Elbert with rout of Monticello

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Union County evened its region record to 1-1 while staying afloat at 3-3 overall following a weekend split with Elbert County and Monticello.

The Panthers came out flat Friday night in Elberton and never threatened in a 61-29 loss to the Blue Devils.

Less than 24 hours later, Union County returned home to host a winless Monticello Hurricanes squad, and despite a lethargic first quarter, the Panthers opened up a bit of breathing room in the second before a late onslaught put the visitors away 66-42.

"At halftime we talked about how important the first three minutes of the third quarter were going to be," Union County Head Coach Casey Jones said. "We were able to build a little bit of lead then it seemed like it went from an eight point lead to a 25-point lead just like that."

The junior duo of Pierson Allison and Sawyer Drake went for 21 and 20 points, respectively while carefully selecting their movements to attack.

Early on it was Drake, who went into the break with 13 points. Then, following a slow start from long distance, Allison found his stroke and put up 13 points of his own in the second half.

While Allison may have earned high-scoring honors, the play of the night belonged to Drake.

After an Allison trey opened up a 38-22 advantage with 3:35 left in the third, Monticello began chipping away and trimmed the Panther lead to 40-30 with a minute to play in the period.

But Drake was through playing around.

With 53 seconds remaining in the third, Drake received a pass in the corner and drove the base line, taking off from outside the paint and soaring over the late-arriving Hurricane defender for the one-handed slam plus a foul.

After a few moments of chest bumping and high-fives,



L-R: Sawyer Drake soars over a defender in the third quarter for a one-handed dunk plus a foul. The junior guard/forward scored 39 points in two games over the weekend. Junior Sawyer Brey glides past a Hurricane defender for two points during the third quarter of Union County's 66-42 region victory. Photos/Todd Forrest

Drake bridled his adrenaline to sink the and-one free throw for a 43-30 Union lead -- reminding everyone that, no, a dunk contest hadn't broken out and there was still another 8-plus minutes of a game to be played.

"That dunk really energized and motivated us," Jones said. "It was a great night for us."

Trying to weather the storm until the end of the period, Monticello was victimized seconds later when Allison picked their pocket for a layup and a 45-30 lead after three.

The fourth began with an Allison three, followed by a Sawyer Brey breakaway, resulting in an intentional foul to prevent another thundering dunk.

Brey would sink 1-of-2 after taking a nasty spill onto the hardwood. Keeping possession, Allison was fouled on his dribble drive, sending him to the line for the old fashion 3-point play.

Leading 52-32, Allison went on back on the attack, driving inside for another deuce. Following a Monticello free throw, Drake scored on a put-back,

Cayden Rich and Brey added baskets in the paint and Colton Day hit a pair of free throws for Union's largest lead of the day at 62-34 with 1:58 remaining.

Day hit two more 20 seconds later and Christian Robertson added another deuce for a 66-38 advantage at the 1:10 mark.

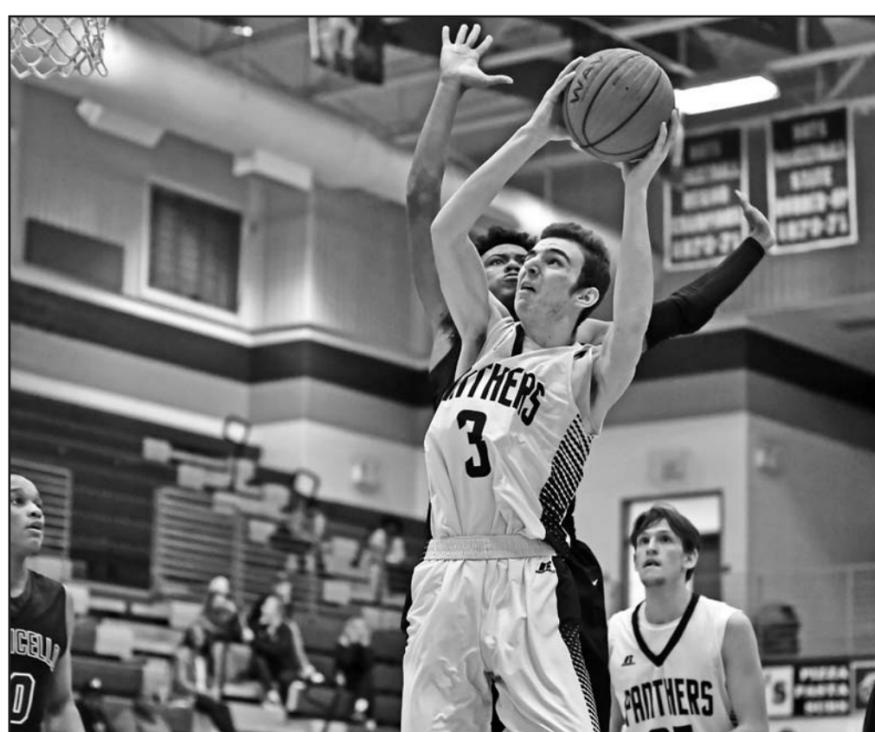
Brey ended up with 9 points and Day added six. Jared Nelson had four while Kanon Hemphill, Rich and Robertson chipped in two apiece.

The first quarter was a back-and-forth affair as Union held an 8-7 lead after one quarter on 4 points apiece from Allison and Drake.

The second quarter opened with a 6-1 Panther spurt but the Canes responded with six-straight for a 14-14 tie.

Union began to pull away with a Day putback and an Allison layup off a turnover. Leading 18-16, Drake nailed a three from the wing and an Allison steal-and-score made it 23-19 with under a minute left in the half.

Brey delivered a huge spark when he drilled a 3-ball at



the buzzer for a 26-19 halftime score.

Jared Nelson provided a spark with consecutive baskets to open the third -- stretching the Union lead to 30-21. A 1-of-2 trip to the line by Brey made it a 10-point game before a Drake layup stretched it to 33-21 at the 4-minute mark.

A fast-break layup by Brey gave the Panthers a 35-22 advantage before Allison found his shooting stroke with his first triple of the night for a 38-22 score.

"When (Pierson Allison) is having an off-night we need the other guys to step up and they did tonight," Jones said. "Obviously, (Allison) is one of the focal points of our offense and we need him to keep shooting."

"He struggled in the first half but then he started getting to the rim and that helped him get going. But he still finished with 21 points and I'll take that every night."

Panthers 29, Elbert County 61 - Drake accounted for 19 of Union County's 29 points as the Blue Devils dominated

wire-to-wire with three scorers in double figures.

"We were off nine days and to come off a layoff like that against a team like Elbert is very tough," Jones said. "In my opinion, Elbert is going to be one of the top-two teams in the region. They're a very good team."

Drake scored four of his team's six first quarter points and 10 in the first half as Elbert built leads of 17-6 after one and 28-14 at the half.

The Blue Devils quickly put any comeback hopes to rest with a 20-6 third quarter -- building a 48-20 advantage entering the fourth.

Allison was held to a season-low 2 points while Rich finished with six and Day added two.

"We never could get going but a lot of that is because of (Elbert's) defense," Jones said. "They are very disciplined and it was just one of those nights where we couldn't get anything going."

Up next - On Monday, the Panthers visited Towns County

for a makeup game originally scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 8. The first attempt at a rescheduled was on Dec. 11 but no officials were available.

On Tuesday, Union County hosts Social Circle, who is coming off a narrow win over Monticello on Friday night. Tuesday night's game tips off an hour early with the girls getting underway at 5 p.m.

The pre-Christmas schedule concludes Thursday when Murphy, NC visits after winning a football state championship last week. The girls are scheduled to tip at 6 p.m.

Battle of the States - Union County will open the BOTS Christmas Tournament on Dec. 27 at 5:30 p.m. with Armuchee (Rome).

As of this writing, Armuchee is 3-5 with wins over Pepperell, Dade County and Gordon Central -- three teams with a combined record of 3-23.

Union County will face the winner/loser of Murphy, NC and Walhalla, SC the following day.