

# Sports

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## Lady Panthers dominate, Panthers stumble at Social Circle

By Todd Forrest  
Sports Editor  
sports@nganews.com

**Social Circle** - Union County split last Tuesday's Region 8-AA road trip at Social Circle with the Lady Panthers dominating an overmatched opponent in a 56-24 victory.

The Panthers, meanwhile, fell short in a 45-40 loss that saw Union County (3-5, 1-2) battle back from a double-digit deficit on three different occasions, eventually taking a 34-30 lead in the fourth quarter before the Redskins closed with a 15-6 run to improve to 3-0 in region play.

**Lady Panthers 56, Social Circle 24** - Dating back to the 2016-17 season, the Lady Redskins had dropped 27 straight region games, and by halftime of last week's contest, it was obvious that Union County would hand them No. 28.

Sophomore Ava Hunter scored a game-high 17 while freshman Ellie Cook and sophomore Rebekah Chambers added 11 each to lead the Lady Panthers to 8-1 overall and 3-0 in Region 8-AA.

Cook and Hunter combined for a dozen first-quarter points as Union built an 18-4 advantage after one. Hunter poured in eight more in a second period that saw the Lady Panthers limit Social Circle to just one free throw. Chambers, Brooke Dockrey and Andelin Hill paced Union offensively as they outscored the home team 17-1 in the quarter to take a 35-5 halftime lead.

The second half was a near-stalemate as the Lady Panther starters gave way to the reserves during the third. Leading 46-13 after three, the fourth quarter was shortened to six minutes as Chambers and sophomore Ansley Collins scored eight of their team's 10 points in the final frame.

Hill finished with 6 points, Dockrey had five, Collins added four and McCarter scored two.

On Saturday, Union County hosted Gilmer, but due to an early holiday deadline, the recap will be available in next week's newspaper.

The Battle of the States gets underway on Thursday,



Freshman Ellie Cook (L) scored 11 at Social Circle to finish as one of three Lady Panthers in double figures; Senior Kyle Morlock (R) scored 12 in the loss at Social Circle. His night was highlighted by a game-tying dunk that closed a 15-4 third quarter to erase an 11-point deficit. Photos/Todd Forrest

Dec. 26 at 1 p.m. when the Lady Panthers host Walhalla, SC.

The Lady Razorbacks are currently 3-2 with a 74-48 loss at Rabun County.

Union's day two opponent will be the winner/loser of the 10 a.m. game between Murphy, NC and Lumpkin County. (Brackets on Page 3C)

**Panthers 40, Social Circle 45** - A dozen second-half points from Pierson Allison wasn't enough to finish off the Union County comeback bid at Social Circle last week.

The Panthers, who are still without the injured Sawyer Drake, shot just 7-for-25 (28%) from the floor and 0-for-4 from 3-point range during the first half as Social Circle built an 18-7 advantage in the early stages of the second quarter. Later, they would hold a 21-11 lead before entering the break with a 26-15 upper hand.

The third got underway with a 7-0 Union County run to pull within four at 26-22. The spurt began with a Morlock putback followed by a free throw by Cayden Rich. Moments later,

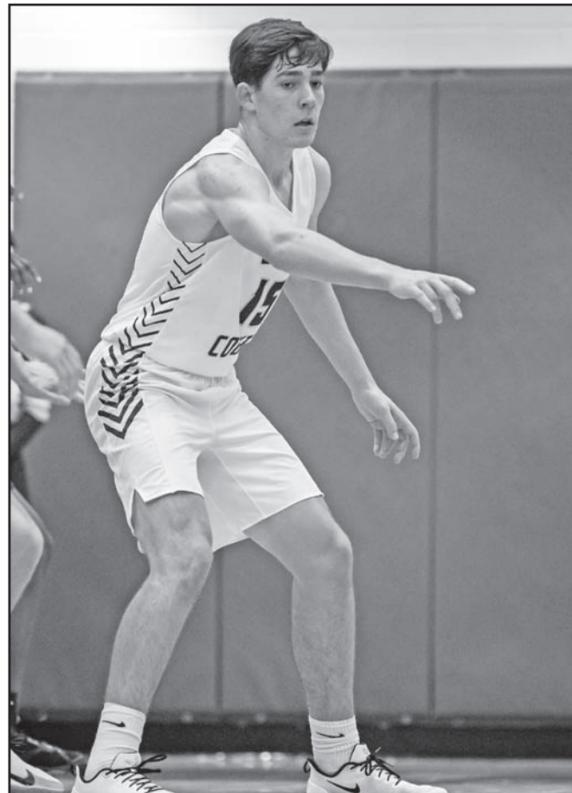
Rich came up with a steal and found Allison for a fast-break layup then Allison sank a pair from the line to cap off the run.

Down 28-22, Rich countered a Redskins' layup with one of his own on the other end. Still trailing by four in the third, Union answered with a designed play to pull within two when sophomore Landon Cox fed a cutting Brey under the basket for an easy deuce.

A pair of Social Circle free throws stretched the difference back to four at 30-26 but Allison answered with two from the stripe to make it a one-possession game.

Following a brief cold stretch by both teams, Allison stole a Redskins' inbound pass and fed Morlock, who was trailing on the play, for a two-handed slam to even the score at 30-30.

The fourth got underway and the Panthers went back to Morlock, who was fouled in the post resulting in two made free throws for his team's first lead of the night at 32-30. On the ensuing Social Circle possession, junior Kaston Hemphill



came up with a loose ball and fired a fullcourt baseball pass to Morlock for a basket and a 34-30 advantage just over a minute into the period.

After an illegal screen by Union County, the Redskins ended their scoring drought with a feed off a dribble-drive for an easy layup. Later, the Panthers were hit with a traveling violation and Social Circle made them pay with an old-fashioned 3-point followed by another basket on its next possession.

Trailing 37-34, Union County was whistled for another illegal screen before getting tagged with a defensive foul on what appeared to be a slip. Luckily, the Redskins missed both free throws and Allison immediately attacked the basket, earning a trip to the line to pull within a point.

Social Circle returned to the line on the very next possession and stretched the margin back to three at 39-36. After Union missed a layup on the other end, the Redskins began to pull away with two more free throws for a 41-36 advantage.

perfect at the line. Down 44-40, Union would get to the line but missed both shots. With the game in hand, Social Circle sank 1-of-2 in its final trip to the charity stripe.

For the first time in recent history, the Panthers failed to hit a 3-point shot, finishing 0-for-6 from deep. The Redskins finished 3-for-8 (38%) from long distance and 14-for-26 (54%) from the floor. Nineteen Social Circle turnovers and a 12-3 margin on the offensive glass kept Union in the game as the Redskins won the free throw battle, hitting 64% on 14-for-22, to the Panthers' 56% on 10-of-18.

Allison led the way with 17 points, 4 steals and 4 assists. Morlock had 12 points and 3 boards; Rich added 5 points and 2 steals, Brey scored 4 points with 3 boards and Cox chipped in 2 points and 3 rebounds to round out the Union County scoring.

The Panthers hosted Gilmer on Saturday in a game played prior to the early holiday deadline. Results will be available in next week's paper.

The Battle of the States begins Thursday, Dec. 26 at 2:30 p.m. vs undefeated Walhalla, SC, who already owns a 77-58 win over Region 8-AA's Rabun County.

Union County's day two opponent will be the winner/loser of the 11:30 p.m. game between Murphy, NC and Lumpkin County. (Brackets on Page 3C)



Rebekah Chambers scored a career-high 11 at SC. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior point guard Pierson Allison's 12 second half points weren't enough at Social Circle. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Andelin Hill battles for a rebound in the paint during a recent Union County win. Photo/Todd Forrest