

# Sports

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## Panthers remain winless following trips to Banks and Elbert

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Union County enters the final week of the regular season with an 0-8 record following a pair of region road losses at Banks County and at Elbert County.

The Panthers opened the week with a visit to Banks County on Tuesday and immediately fell into a 20-0 hole before eventually suffering a 77-42 loss.

Trailing 20-0 after one quarter, Union County got on the board at the 7:30 mark of the second with a Landon Kight free throw. Sophomore Eli Underwood made it a 20-4 contest two minutes later with a pull-up trey from the top of the key, but the Panthers wouldn't get any closer.

Banks County outscored Union 16-4 to close out the half with a 36-8 advantage.

The Leopards exploded for 27 points in the third, shooting 4 of 7 from behind the arc as they opened up a 63-24 lead. The home team would finish 14 for 26 from 3-point range and 30 for 57 overall. Banks County also capitalized on 22 Panther turnovers.

Underwood and Kight led Union County with 9 points each. Lake Hughes scored eight and Caleb John added seven. Hayden Payne finished with 6 points, and Daniel Snow rounded out the scoring with 3 points.

Payne led the way



Sophomore Eli Underwood launches a 3-pointer from the corner during a recent Union County road game. Photo/Todd Forrest

with seven rebounds; Underwood and Kight chipped in six boards apiece. John's six assists were a team-high;

Hughes and Kight each turned in a team-high two steals.

At Elbert County, Union County fell behind 24-5 after one during a 68-26 loss.

Hughes knocked down a pair of treys while leading the Panthers with 8 points. John finished with seven; Payne and Kight added four each. Underwood scored two, and Griffin Young had one.

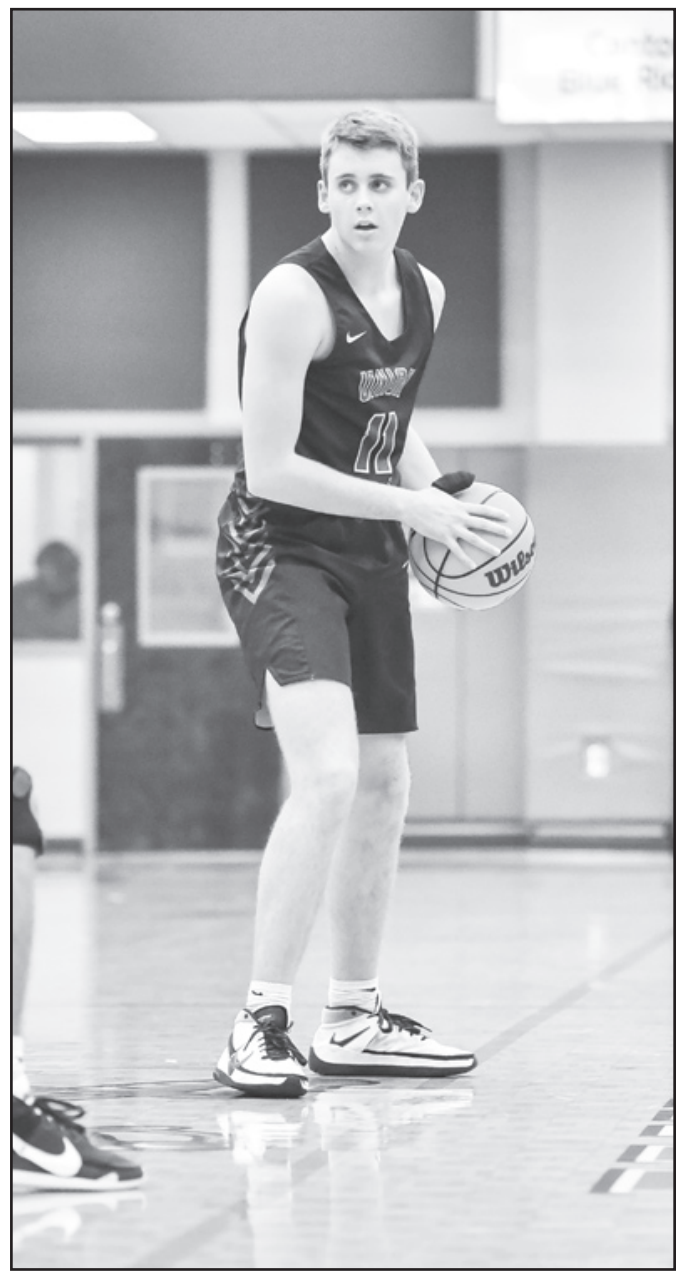
The Blue Devils continued pulling away in the second quarter, outscoring Union County 20-3 to take a 44-8 halftime advantage.

The Panthers will wrap up the regular season with three games this week, beginning with Banks County on Tuesday. The girls' game is scheduled to tip off at 5:30 p.m.

The Lady Panthers visit Rabun Gap in a girls-only contest on Thursday, but the Panthers return to action on Friday when they play host to Elbert County.

Regular season play concludes Saturday at Rabun County. The girls will tip at 6:30 p.m. Friday and 4:30 p.m. on Saturday.

The Region 8-AA Tournament gets underway next week at either Banks County or Elbert County, depending on which team finishes atop the region standings. According to Union County Athletic Director Mandy Hunter, a coin-toss will likely determine the tourney site if the two squads remain tied.



Junior forward Landon Kight looks for room to operate near the top of the key. Photo/Todd Forrest

## Lady Panthers fall short at Banks, overwhelmed at No. 2 Elbert



Sophomore guard Ellie Cook drives into the paint for two during a recent home game. Photo/Todd Forrest

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The road was unkind to the Lady Panthers last week as Union County dropped a pair of Region 8-AA contests at Banks County and

at No. 2 Elbert County.

Winless in region play, the fourth-place Lady Panthers traveled to Banks County on Tuesday, where a victory would have created a third-place tie with the home-

standing Leopards. Unfortunately, Union County couldn't get over the hump in the fourth quarter as Banks pulled away for a 49-39 victory.

Trailing 8-5 after a low-scoring first quarter, Union County

sophomore Ellie Cook scored eight of her 11 points in the second to keep the Lady Panthers within striking distance at 21-17.

Junior Rebekah Chambers scored five of her team-high 13 points as Union County continued to battle throughout the third period, trailing 31-27 after three.

But Banks County used a balanced scoring attack over the final eight minutes to put the visitors away. Five different Lady Leopards connected from the floor to preserve a 10-point victory while overcoming a 1-for-5 fourth-quarter performance at the charity stripe.

Meanwhile, Union County's frontcourt duo of Chambers and junior Ava Hunter combined for 10 points in the final frame, but it wasn't enough as Banks County outscored the Lady Panthers 16-12 down the stretch.

Chambers scored six in the fourth quarter while pacing Union County with 13 points. Hunter chipped in 12 points – nine coming in the first half.

Freshman Sofia McNabb rounded out the Union County scoring with 3 points.

On Friday, the Lady Panthers paid a visit to No. 2 Elbert County and were unable to keep pace with the high-scoring Blue Devils in a 68-36 defeat.

Despite the loss, Hunter scored 18 points to become one of the youngest players in school history (boys or girls) to surpass 1,000 career points.

Hunter scored six of her team-high 18, and Chambers added five during the first quarter as Union County trailed just 18-15 after one.

However, Elbert County used a 20-6 second period to open up a 38-21 halftime advantage as Hunter accounted for four of her team's six points in the quarter.

The Lady Panthers' offense continued to struggle with six points in the third, allowing Elbert



Sophomore guard Corinne Hill surveys her options from the corner. Photo/Todd Forrest

to put the game away at 55-27 entering the fourth.

Needing one basket in the fourth quarter to reach 1,000 career points, Hunter knocked down a free throw and a field goal to exit the contest with 1,001 points.

Chambers finished with 10 points in the loss, while Cook, Corinne Hill, Kaylee Helton and Kyra McKechnie scored 2 points each.

The Lady Panthers have a

busy final week to the regular season with trips to Rabun Gap at 6 p.m. Thursday and No. 3 Rabun County at 4:30 p.m. Saturday. Union County will play host to Banks County at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday and No. 2 Elbert County at 6:30 p.m. on Friday.

The Region 8-AA Tournament will get underway next week at the boys' No. 1 seed. Elbert County and Banks County were tied for first place with one loss apiece as of this writing.