

Providence Christian sweeps doubleheader at Union County

Panthers need two wins vs. East Jackson to keep playoff hopes alive

By Todd Forrest Sports Editor sports@nganews.com

Following a pair of Saturday losses to Providence Christian, Union County is against the wall entering the final two weeks of the regular season, sitting two games back of fourth-place East Jackson (10-11, 4-5) with six games remaining in the hunt for the final playoff spot from 8-AA.

The Panthers (5-11, 2-7) and East Jackson square off this week in a make-or-break three-game tilt that would see Union County eliminated from postseason contention with a series loss. Union needs a sweep to overtake the Eagles while winning two of three keeps the Panthers' playoff hopes alive for another week ahead of the year's final series vs. first-place Banks County.

Panthers 1, Providence 3 (Gm. 2) - Union County hosted the Storm in a makeup doubleheader rescheduled from March 22. The Panthers lost the series opener 10-0 on March 19 in Lilburn, but rain washed out the weekend games at UCHS.

During the first of two games on Saturday, the Panthers stranded 10 runners in a 3-1 loss, including a pair of bases-loaded opportunities in the third and fourth innings to waste a stellar pitching performance from sophomore Gunnar Akins.

Akins went the distance, striking out five and not surrendering a walk while giving up three earned runs. He finished 2 for 4 at the plate - his third multi-hit game of the year.

Providence grabbed a 1-0 lead via two first-inning singles before an RBI double made it 2-0 in the third.

Union County, which went six-up, six-down through two, answered by loading the bases in the bottom of the third when Eli Sosensky walked, Maddox Patton singled and Connor Swanson reached on



Sophomore Gunnar Akins tossed a complete game but took the tough-luck loss in the first half of Saturday's doubleheader vs. Providence Christian Academy despite going 2 for 4 at the plate. Photo/Todd Forrest

double play. Akins led off the

3 with his team's lone RBI;

Sosensky went 1 for 1 with a

factured the go-ahead run in

the sixth inning after Union

County tied things up in the

winning run at first base in the

seventh after Hayden Hughes

worked a leadoff walk, and

Swanson was plunked with

bottom of the fifth.

Patton finished 2 for

Panthers 1, Providence

The Panthers left the

flyout closed the contest.

stolen base.

an error. But Providence kept on, one-out jam in the seventh the Panthers off the board courtesy of consecutive strikeouts to end the frame.

bottom half with a base knock Moses Stevens wore an 81 mph fastball to lead off the before two groundouts and a Union County fourth, then back-to-back two-out singles by Bo Brown and Sosensky loaded the bags before a flyout Brown ended the day 2 for 3; halted the threat.

pair of walks; Davis added a Akins' one-out single went to waste in the fifth and Providence's solo homer during the sixth bumped the 2 (Gm. 3) - The Storm manumargin to 3-0.

The Panthers finally broke through in the bottom half following a two-out single by Brown and a Sosensky walk, allowing Patton to plate the courtesy runner, Junior Davis, on an opposite-field single.

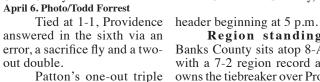
Akins escaped a twotwo away.

Sophomore Eli Gwnn when he turned a tapper back delivered Union another domito the mound into a 1-5-3

nant pitching performance, working into the seventh, allowing 6 hits, 3 walks and 2 runs (one earned) while recording 5 punch outs in 6 1/3 innings. Hughes shut the door in the seventh, picking up a strikeout over the final 2/3.

Patton went 2 for 3 at the plate, accounting for two of Union's three hits; Hughes walked and scored a run during a 1-for-3 day.

Hughes scored when his base hit to center led off the fifth and Sosensky's oneout walk advanced him into scoring position. A two-out wild pitch had the runners on the move when the Storm's catcher short-hopped his throw into left field, bringing home Hughes.



in the bottom half had Union in business until a lineout and a groundout kept the score at 2-1

The Storm got on the board in the second inning on a steal of home after two hits put at 2-7. runners on the corners.

the fourth when Patton singled to left field, but the sophomore was cut down trying to stretch it into a double.

traveled to East Jackson on Monday with the previously scheduled trip to Gilmer canceled.

Union County hosts East Jackson in a Friday double-

Region standings: Banks County sits atop 8-AA with a 7-2 region record and owns the tiebreaker over Providence and Athens Academy.

Providence and Athens Academy are tied for second at 6-3; East Jackson is fourth at 4-5. Union and Fellowship Christian are in fifth place

Union holds the tie-Union went hitless until breaker over Fellowship, while Athens and Providence square off this week to take control of the No. 2 seed.

Remaining on the sched-Up next: The Panthers ule for first-place Banks County is Fellowship and Union. Providence has Athens and East Jackson; Athens will meet Providence and Fellowship. East Jackson has Union and Providence.





For the second time in eight days, sophomore Eli Gwynn did enough to pick up the W but was let down by his offense during a 2-1 loss vs. Providence Christian in Saturday's second game. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sophomore catcher Bo Brown hangs on to a foul-tip third strike during game one of Saturday's doubleheader vs. Providence Christian. Photo/Todd Forrest