

Sports

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Union leads wire-to-wire in 55-31 rout of Lady Indians

Fair, McCarter, and Daniel combine for 39 points as Lady Panthers win ninth in-a-row over Towns

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The Lady Panthers received career-best performances from Ashley Fair and Kait McCarter as Union opened with six unanswered points and closed on a 17-5 run to claim their first victory of the season, 55-31 over rival Towns County last Tuesday in Blairsville.

Fair posted a career-high with 15 points, 12 coming in the first half as Union (1-1) opened up a 14-point lead in the second quarter at 27-13. The Lady Indians responded with a 6-1 burst over the final 90 seconds of the half to move within single digits until a pair of Grace Wischmeyer free throws put the Lady Panthers back on top by 11 entering the break.

Meanwhile, McCarter went for 13 points, 11 rebounds, and 4 blocks – all career highs as she helped her team pull away with 10 second half points.

Bailey Daniel added 11 points for Union, to go with 5 steals, 4 assists, and 3 rebounds.

Towns opened the third quarter with a trey that sliced their deficit to eight, but Daniel answered with a jumper to return the lead to double-digits.

McCarter and Maggie Stuart countered a Lady Indians bucket with consecutive put-back scores, then, following another Towns County deuce, McCarter struck again – giving Union a 38-26 advantage with 4:15 left in the third.

Wischmeyer knocked down a mid-range jump shot 29 seconds later to open up a 40-26 lead and that score would hold up into the fourth quarter as both squads fell into a 4-minute scoring drought.

Less than 15 seconds into the final period, Fair connected on her third trey of the game for the largest margin of the evening at 43-26. Towns hit 1-of-2 at the line before McCarter went back to work inside for another close-range bucket.

Brooke Dockrey followed up with one of her own at the 5:54 mark, then McCarter hit from close-range – giving Union a 20-point lead at 49-29.

Dockrey scored off another offensive board and McCarter capped off her 10-point second half with a put-back of her own



Ashley Fair connected on three treys as the senior finished with a career-high 15 points in the win over Towns. Photo/Todd Forrest



Grace Wischmeyer dribbles around a screen before stopping-and-popping a 16-foot jumper vs Towns County. Photo/Todd Forrest

to make it a 53-29 game.

Towns scored its final basket with 3:08 remaining and Daniel put the finishing touches on the victory with a pair from the line at the 2:18 mark.

Dockrey and Wischmeyer chipped in 6 points each for Union with Dockrey recording 2 steals and Wischmeyer grabbing a pair of rebounds.

Adeline Dockrey finished with 2 points, 8 rebounds, 2 steals, and a blocked shot. Stuart

also scored 2 points while hauling in 3 boards and blocking 3 shots.

Kristen Byers led the Lady Indians with 12 points, Madison McClure added seven, and Lexi Ledford scored six.

The Lady Panthers connected on a season-high four treys, while attempting a season-low 15 shots from beyond the arc. Fair shot 60-percent from 3-point land, going 3-for-5 while the other trey belonged



Towns County had no answer for Kait McCarter in the paint. McCarter was a force on both ends with 13 points, 11 boards, 3 offensive rebounds, and 4 blocked shots. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Lady Panthers return to the court following a second half timeout. Photo/Todd Forrest

to Daniel. At the line, Daniel hit 4-of-6 and Wischmeyer was 4-of-4 to lead Union County to a 9-for-16 (56 percent) game from the charity stripe.

The victory was the ninth-straight over Towns County – dating back to the 2012 Battle of the States Christmas Tournament. It also marks the longest winning-streak over Towns in more than 20 years.

Union County Head Coach David Tucker now im-

proves to 9-2 all-time vs the Lady Indians, giving him a better winning percentage against Towns County than Jim Hughes, Mike West, and Robbie Stancil.

Up next is a rematch from the 2016 8-AA Region Championship game when the Lady Panthers host Rabun County on Tuesday night at 6 p.m.

The Lady Cats are currently 2-1 with a pair of blowout victories over Dawson County

(76-51) and East Hall (68-22).

Their lone defeat came last Tuesday at the hands of Lakeview Academy, 67-60. Rabun currently owns a four-game winning streak over Union, however the Lady Panthers last victory came in Blairsville back in January 2015.

On Saturday, Union will visit Towns County in another rematch and another 6 p.m. tip-off.

Indians coast to 78-69 victory after leading by 24 to begin fourth

Foul trouble plagues Panthers as Towns County ends 17 years of misery in Blairsville

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Despite playing without the services of 6-foot, 6-inch center Adam Barrett, the Towns County Indians (3-0) used a 26-11 second quarter to open up a 49-30 half-time lead that the Panthers (1-1) were unable to recover from until too late.

Towns County's 76-69 victory was their first win ever at Union County's current gymnasium – a streak that dated back to 2002-03 and lasted 13 games. The streak witnessed four presidential elections and survived six Panther head coaches. In fact, Towns' last win at Union came in the Pit back in January 2000, almost 17 years ago.

With senior Lawson Baenninger on the bench after getting whistled for three questionable offensive fouls, Towns closed the second quarter on an 11-2 run after ending the first on a 7-2 spurt.

The Indians quickly opened the third with a jumper to put the Panthers in a 21-point hole, their second straight 20-point home deficit to Towns County. And unfortunately, there would be no comeback on this night.

A free throw and a put-back by Crawford Colwell, then a trey by Parker McCombs pulled Union to within 17, but Towns outscored the Panthers 16-9 over the final five minutes of the third to maintain a comfortable 69-45 advantage after three.

A driving layup by Baenninger and a three from Colwell brought Union back within 20 with 5:02 to play but Cole Wright picked up his fifth foul moments later and the Indians hit 1-of-2 at the line to take a 70-50 lead with 4:52 to play.

Less than 20 seconds later, a floater in the paint dropped for Baenninger and Cole Dockrey scored on a lay-up to bring Union



Cole Dockrey, along with Crawford Colwell, brought Union back to within seven after trailing by as many as 24. Photo/Todd Forrest

within 16 for the first time since the 1-minute mark of the second quarter.

However, Towns responded with a basket that put the Panthers in an insurmountable hole at 72-54 with 2:54 to play.

But Union refused to quit. Dockrey connected from long distance then Colwell scored on a put-back to slice the Indians' lead to 73-59. A Towns County basket was answered by another Dockrey trey with 1:40 remaining.

Colwell split two shots from the line to make it a 12-point game before Dockrey stole a pass and knocked down his third trey less than two minutes, bringing the

Panthers to within single digits as the clock neared 30 seconds.

The Indians hit 1-for-2 at the line with 28 seconds to play but Colwell hit his team's fifth-and-final trey of the final 2:40 – trimming the Towns County advantage to 76-69.

The seven point margin was the Indians' narrowest lead since they led 33-26, midway through the second period. Towns was perfect on its final trip to the line to bring the final score to 78-69.

Baenninger scored 10 in the first quarter to lead Union while Wright added six but the Indians had little trouble scoring as they tallied at least 20 points in each



Nothing comes easy in the paint during a rivalry game, especially when Crawford Colwell (24) is defending the basket. With 18 points, Colwell gave Union a solid performance on both ends of the court. Photo/Todd Forrest

of the first three quarters.

A deep trey by Marty Kronz pulled the Panthers within four at 23-19 early in the second but Towns went on an 8-0 run to take a 31-19 lead with 6:10 to play before the break.

A Cole Davis three and a free throw by Baenninger pulled Union back within eight, then a Baenninger trey on the heels of two Indian free throws had Union within seven at 33-26. Once again, Towns answered and closed the frame on a 16-4 run with Baenninger on the bench for the final 3:04 of the half.

Colwell and Baenninger led Union with 18 points each while Dockrey poured in 13 points.

Wright added eight, Davis had six, while Kronz and McCombs finished with 3 points each.

Towns County senior Will DeVries led all scorers with 20, while junior Zach Davenport added 17 for the Indians.

Senior Major Moss finished with 15, Hayesville, NC transfer, junior Logan Cowart had 14, and senior Colton Shook scored 6.

Union will host Rabun County at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday where the Wildcats will be at full strength for the first time this season after their football team suffered a 35-16 loss to Fitzgerald in the Class AA Elite 8.

Rabun defeated the Panthers in two-of-the-three meetings

last season but Union's lone victory came at home as Baenninger knocked down a game-winning 15-footer to close out a career-night for the then-junior with a career high 35 points.

On Saturday night, Union County will be seeking revenge as they travel to Towns County looking to avoid consecutive losses to the Indians – something that has only happened once in the last 20 years.

The girls tip-off at 6 p.m. with the boys to follow. Towns will be playing the second game of a back-to-back after they open region play at Providence Christian on Friday. Meanwhile Union is off on Friday.