

# Sports

See the Sports Section at nghanews.com

## Rebels unable to contain Colwell, Baenninger; Union pulls away in fourth

### Late surge falls short as Rabun hits two free throws with :03 remaining to sink Panthers in Tiger

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nganews.com

Union County split its two games last week with a 56-34 victory over rival Fannin County in the Region 7-AAA opener for both squads.

Senior Lawson Baenninger and junior Crawford Colwell were too much for the Rebels as the duo outscored the visitors by themselves, 42-34.

On Friday, Union traveled to Rabun County, where they've only beaten the Cats one time since 2008, and saw its late rally come up short, 59-55.

**Panthers 56, Fannin County 34** - Fannin held an early 6-5 lead but it was all Union for the remaining 3-and-a-half quarters as the Panthers put the game away with a 12-2 run to open the fourth and the Rebels fell for the 17th time in their last 20 trips to Blairsville.

The win marked the 50th of Union County Head Boys Coach Casey Jones' varsity basketball coaching career, that currently, is just shy of the midway point of his fourth season at the helm.

Jones becomes the fourth Union boys coach since 1994 to win 50 games, joining Tim Hunter (56), Ben Corley (55), and current girls coach David Tucker (51). For the full list, see the box at the end of the article.

Senior Lawson Baenninger and junior Crawford Colwell scored 21 each - combining for 42 of Union's 56 points. Ten of the remaining 14 points belonged to juniors with Wright scoring four, and Cole Dockrey, Cole Davis, and RJ Banton each scoring two. Senior Parker McCombs chipped in the other 4 points to round out the Union scoring.

Following Fannin's 6-5 lead, Colwell knocked down a pull-up jumper to hand the Panthers a lead they would never relinquish. Baenninger hit 2-of-2 at the line for a 9-6 Union lead. A Colwell lay-up and a free throw from Wright gave the Panthers a 12-8 lead after one.

Colwell opened the second with a driving lay-up before Fannin was hit with a technical foul that sent Baenninger to the line, where he sank both attempts to double up the Rebels at 16-8. Another jump shot from Colwell and a Baenninger trey made it a 21-8 game before Fannin halted the run with a basket at the 2:06 mark of the period.

Baenninger nailed a corner-three 20 seconds later but the Rebels closed the half with a pair of baskets to pull within 10 at the break.

A 1-of-3 trip to the line and a deuce pulled Fannin within seven just 63 seconds into the third. Colwell scored on a put-back and Wright hit 1-of-2



Energy levels vs Fannin were the highest of the season thanks to the UCHS Student Section, AKA "The Pit Crew" and the cheerleaders, as a result, the Panthers played their best game on the year. Photo/Todd Forrest

at the charity stripe to push the Panther advantage back to 10 at 27-17.

Wright scored in the paint after both teams suffered through a two-minute-plus scoring drought, but back-to-back buckets from Fannin kept them within single digits as the clock approached 90 seconds to play in the third.

Baenninger found Dockrey in the paint for two but the Rebels refused to go away. A Fannin County and-1 was followed by a Union turnover that led to a Rebel lay-up - trimming the Panthers' lead to five with 40 seconds remaining in the period.

A 1-of-2 trip to the line by Baenninger and a 2-for-2 trip by Banton pushed the advantage back to 8 to close out the third frame.

Colwell was perfect at the line during Union's opening possession of the fourth and Banton drew a charge on the other end, the call also drew the ire of the Fannin coach and he was hit with a T. Baenninger converted both technical free throws and Colwell tacked on a lay-up moments later to give the Panthers a 40-26 lead, less than 90 seconds into the quarter.

A minute later, Wright drove the lane, attracted the Rebel defenders, and dished off to Colwell for another lay-in. Baenninger hit two at the line to give Union an 18-point cushion with 5:03 to play.

Fannin finally got on the board in the final period with a put-back but Colwell answered with another pair from the charity stripe - capping off a 12-2 run with 4:34 remaining.

The Rebels knocked down two at the line to pull within 16 but Fannin received its third technical of the game, the second on a player, sending Baenninger back to the line to convert two at the 3:30 mark.

The lead was nine before

Thirty seconds later, McCombs hit a pair of free throws to open up a 20-point lead, 50-30.

McCombs drove inside for a basket and following a Fannin miss on the front-end of a 1-and-1, Baenninger hit 1-of-2 at the line. A Rebel basket was answered by an and-1 from Colwell at the 1:12 mark to give the Panthers a 56-32 lead.

**TIGER - Panthers 55, Rabun County 59** - Trailing by nine with under four minutes to play, Union County stormed back to within two but were unable to complete the comeback, allowing their former regional rival to escape with a 59-55 victory.

The Wildcats have won 11-of-13 from the Panthers, including four straight since Baenninger dropped 35 points, and the game-winning 16-footer on the Cats, back in January.

In the meeting last Friday, Rabun, with the home crowd in their corner, came out of the gates playing intense defense that led to a 7-2 advantage for the boys in red.

The Panthers would respond 8-2 run that gave them a brief lead at 10-9 before the Cats regained the slight edge, 11-10 after one.

Rabun (5-3) took the second frame 23-19 as Baenninger and Wright combined for 10 points while getting help off the bench from Dockrey, freshman Sawyer Drake, and sophomore Britt Waller.

Trailing 34-29 at the break, the Panthers were unable to keep pace early in the third and trailed by as many as 10 during the period.

Baenninger and Colwell were forced to carry the team - combining for all 11 third quarter points, however, they managed to hang around, down eight, 48-40 entering the fourth.

The lead was nine before

the Cats stumbled a bit and Union chipped away, bit-by-bit. They would eventually get within two on three separate occasions over the final three minutes but could never deliver the tying or go-ahead basket.

Still trailing by a basket with 3 seconds to play, a Union foul sent Rabun to the line where they connected on both shots to put the game out of reach at 59-55.

Baenninger finished with 17 to lead the Panthers while Colwell scored 14 and Wright had eight.

Junior Riley Barrett scored 4 points, Dockrey and Davis had three each. Waller and Drake added 2 points each while McCombs and Banton both tossed in a free throw.

Rabun County junior Tevan Dixon carried the offense by himself with 26 points.

No other Wildcat scored more than six.

Up next for the Panthers is a trip to Greater Atlanta Christian as region-play continues with a 6 p.m. girls tip-off. The Spartans are currently 5-1 with 7-AAA wins over Dawson, 64-40 and North Hall, 52-45.

They also routed Jefferson and Winder, edged Marist by five and fell to Buford, 66-57.

Union's last win over GAC came in December 2006 when then-sophomore Michael Ross tied a school record with nine treys in a game.

The Panthers return home on Friday to take on North Hall, who they haven't faced since the 2004 United Community Banks Tip-Off Tournament at White County - a game Union won.

The Trojans are 4-4 with wins over Franklin County, Providence Christian, White County, and East Jackson.

The defeats came at the hands of Banks County, North Forsyth, GAC, and East Hall.



Senior Lawson Baenninger drives for two of his 21 points Fannin last week. Union has won 12 of the last 14 vs Fannin. Photo/Todd Forrest



Juniors Crawford Colwell (24) and Cole Wright (with ball) mix it up in the paint with the big boys from Fannin. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Panthers do have a bit of a measuring stick to look at how they compare with North Hall. The Trojans and Towns County both defeated Providence by a near-identical score, 83-61 (TC) and 83-62 (NH).

On Saturday the Panthers pay a visit to Hayesville, NC who are coming off a 40-point loss to Cherokee, NC. The Jackets' other two games were wins over Highlands, NC and Andrews, NC. The girls will get underway at 5:30 p.m. in Hayesville.

### Union County Boys Basketball coaching wins Since 1994-95

COACH	YEARS	WINS	STATE APP
Tim Hunter	(2006-10)	56	1
Ben Corley	(1998-01)*	55	2
David Tucker	(2010-13)	51	0
<b>Casey Jones</b>	<b>(2013- Pres.)</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>3</b>
Gary Barnes	(2002-04)	35	1
Alan Ross	(1994-97)	33	0
Terry Rogers	(1997-98)	24	0
Carson Turlington	(2004-05)	17	0
Anthony Kummel	(2005-06)	17	0
Jim Hughes	(2001-02)*	14	1

\* - Hughes replaced Corley in Dec. 2001 after Corley won 4 games to open the 2001-02 season.

## Lady Panthers rally from 12-down to take Region 7-AAA opener

### Third-ranked Rabun goes off in first half; take 52-12 lead into halftime; coast to 64-28 win

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
sports@nganews.com

Union County took down Fannin for the eighth time in 10 games thanks to a 22-6 outburst over the final 10:52 to surge past the Lady Rebels, 40-36 for their third win of the season.

Later in the week, the Lady Panthers traveled to Rabun County where they haven't defeated the Lady Cats since 2009, and received more harsh treatment at the hands of third ranked Rabun in a 64-28 loss.

After falling behind 22-7 in the first, Rabun used a 30-5 second to put the game away, up 52-12 at halftime.

**Lady Panthers 40, Fannin County 36** - Trailing 30-18, just past the midway point of the third quarter, the Lady Panthers were on the verge of falling to 2-3 and dropping their region opener to rival Fannin County, a team Union has owned since upsetting the unbeaten and fifth ranked Lady Rebels in January 2011, until an 8-0 spurt to close the period turned into a 22-6 run that handed the Lady Panthers a 40-36 victory.

A 10-10 first quarter turned into a 20-16 Fannin County advantage at the break. A pair of free throws made it a 22-16 game before a 15-footer by sophomore Adeline



Sophomore Adeline Dockrey and the rest of the Lady Panthers refuse to back down against a Class AA state title contender. Photo/Todd Forrest

Dockrey pulled Union back within four.

The next eight points belonged to the Lady Rebels following back-to-back treys and a put-back at the 3:47 mark of the third that opened up their largest lead of the night at 30-18.

Less than a minute later, freshman Brooke Dockrey connected from behind the arc and later, fellow freshman Kait McCarter went inside for a deuce to cut the Fannin lead to seven.

The Lady Rebels missed

the front-end of a 1-and-1 on each of their next two possessions allowing junior Bailey Daniel to drill a trey as time was winding down in the quarter - bringing Union within four to begin the final frame.

Fannin quickly followed up a miss with an offensive board that stretched the lead back to six. With 6:32 to play, Adeline Dockrey hit one at the line and at the 5:52 mark, Daniel fed McCarter down low for the bucket to pull within three.

The Lady Rebels were

unable to convert a 3-point play but the basket still gave them a 32-27 advantage that would hold up until inside the 4-minute mark.

Senior Ashley Fair came up with a steal and went coast-to-coast but was fouled hard from behind on the lay-up attempt - resulting in an intentional foul.

Fair connected on 1-of-2 at the line at the 3:47 mark and Daniel knocked down another 3 seconds later to make it a one-point game.

Fannin would come up



Senior Ashley Fair launches a trey early in the third quarter vs Fannin County. Photo/Todd Forrest

empty on two consecutive trips to the foul line, leaving the door open for Union, who stormed through it with a McCarter lay-in with 2:52 remaining.

The Lady Rebels connected on a base line jumper to regain the lead as the clock ticked under two minutes. Daniel put the Lady Panthers back on top with a driving, left-handed runner in the lane. After a Fannin miss, Brooke Dockrey went to the line with Union shooting a 1-and-1 and with 57 seconds to play, the

freshman guard calmly sank 2-of-2 to make it a 39-36 game.

Another Lady Rebel miss resulted in an 0-for-2 trip to the line by the Lady Panthers with 25 seconds left, allowing Fannin one last attempt to tie the game. With 14 seconds remaining, the Lady Rebels misfired on a 3-ball and Daniel gathered the loose ball and hit one-of-two free throw attempts to put the game away.

Daniel led all scorers. See Lady Panthers, Page 5B