

# Sports

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## Undefeated Panthers begin Region 7-AAA play Tuesday

### Jones off to his best start as head coach following wins over Rabun and Towns

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**TIGER** – Union County's 73-52 victory on Tuesday was the Panthers' first win at Rabun County since the 2012-13 season - which is also the last time Union began the year 3-0.

The Wildcats were playing shorthanded due to the football team reaching the Class AA State Semifinals, providing the Panthers no better opportunity to end its four game skid to Rabun.

And while the first 5 points of the game may have belonged to the home team, it was all Union the rest of the way.

Leading 20-16 after one, sophomore Pierson Allison poured in 10 of his 17 first half points during a 22-5 second quarter outburst that spotted the Panthers a 42-21 advantage with 3:02 remaining before the break.

Union County would cruise into the locker rooms with a commanding 46-25 lead behind 38 first half points from the trio of Allison, senior Crawford Colwell, and sophomore Sawyer Drake.

Drake got the second quarter off and running with a 3-point play followed by an RJ Banton putback that stretched the lead to double digits. Drake crashed the offensive glass for a deuce at the 5:44 mark, then Allison answered a Wildcat trey with one of his own for a 32-19 lead.

Drake hit 1-of-2 at the line before Allison reeled off 7 straight points in a span of 30 seconds, beginning with another triple followed by back-to-back layups off a pair of steals. When Allison finished off his 7-0 run, the Panthers



Sophomore Pierson Allison turns a steal into two of his game-high 20 points at Rabun. Photo/Todd Forrest

were in complete control at 40-21.

A pair of free throws by Crawford Colwell spotted Union a 21-point lead that they would maintain for most of the second half.

Late in the third period with Rabun still trailing by 21, Panther guard Patrick Baggett nailed three consecutive 3-point baskets to open up a 69-39 lead entering the fourth.

The Wildcats would outscore Union County 9-4 in the fourth with Britt Waller providing all four Panther points, en route to a career-high 11-point game.

Allison finished with a game-high 20 points, Crawford Colwell provided 15, while Baggett had 9 and Drake added 8.

Grayson Lane led Rabun County with 15 while Reed had 13 and Dixon chipped in 11.

**Panthers 62, Towns County 54** - Union County moved to 4-0 for the first time under head coach Casey Jones thanks in large part to a 10-2 run to close the third period.

Trailing 23-18 early in the second, the Panthers would outscore Towns County 13-4 before a Bradley Benson trey pulled the Indians within a point at halftime.

Halting a narrow 31-30 edge heading into the third, the two teams would combine for eight lead changes before Crawford Colwell gave Union the lead for good with a 3-point play, sparking the 10-2 run and a 41-34 Panther lead.

Senior Logan Cowart opened the fourth with two of his game-high 18 points to trim the Indian deficit to 41-36 but Union quickly stretched the lead to 12 at the 5:19 mark.

Junior Trent Bradshaw

responded with five unanswered points to cut the margin back to seven with 4:05 remaining, but that's as close as Towns would get.

Drake scored 7 of his team-high 17 points in the fourth quarter and Baggett poured in 7 second half points en route to a 12 point performance.

Allison finished with 9 points on two treys and one old-fashioned 3-point play. His first 3-pointer came at the end of one when he went coast-to-coast and pulled up from the top of the key, giving Union an 18-17 lead at the horn.

Allison converted the and-one in the second quarter to go with treys from Baggett and senior Cole Davis. RJ Banton connected on a pair from the stripe to round out the scoring in the second frame.

Crawford Colwell fin-



Candler Colwell swats a Towns County shot attempt. Photo/Todd Forrest

ished with 8, Davis had 6, and Banton added 2.

Senior Evan Berrong finished with 10 points for the Indians while Bradshaw and senior Zach Davenport chipped in 7 points apiece.

Union County visits Fannin County on Tuesday where the Rebels are currently 1-4 with their lone win a 43-39 victory over Hiwassee Dam.

Last week Fannin visited Towns County and fell 53-41 despite jumping in front 11-2.

The Indians stormed back to even things up at 13-13 after one but Towns was unable to put away the Rebels until the 2:50 mark of the fourth when baskets by Will Travis and Berrong stretched the lead to 11.

Leading 28-23 at the break, the Indians appeared to take control at 35-27 but Fannin answered with six unanswered

to pull within a deuce at the 2-minute mark of the third. Towns eventually took a 37-33 lead into the fourth on a Davenport steal-and-score.

The Rebels were led in scoring by senior Payton Holt's 16 and junior Chandler Kendall's 11.

Chandler Kendall is the cousin of *Towns County Herald* Sports Writer Jerry Kendall.

Another common opponent between the Panthers and the Rebels is Gilmer, who knocked off Fannin 43-34 on Nov. 20.

On Friday, Union will host Rabun County, looking for their first season sweep of the Wildcats in 10 years (2007-08).

Rabun will still be without its football players, who are playing for a state title on Saturday.

## Lady Panthers hold off Towns after upset bid falls short at No. 2 Rabun

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With under six minutes to play and the Lady Panthers nursing a nine-point advantage, Towns County - coming off its first win of the season 24 hours earlier - made a late push behind freshman Kennedy Henson to pull within three before Union delivered a knockout blow in the form of a 9-0 run over the final 1:49 to take a 54-42 victory.

In her two games vs Union County, Henson has averaged 23 points, and last Saturday she scored six of her team's eight points during an 8-2 run to make it a one-possession game at 45-42 with 2:06 remaining.

In the previous meeting back on Nov. 21, the Lady Panthers watched Towns County erase a 19-point deficit in a little more than 10 minutes. So as Union County (3-1) took its 27-17 lead into halftime over the Lady Indians (1-5), not one single Panther supporter felt comfort in the 10-point cushion.

As Towns County narrowed the gap to three late in the fourth quarter, it was the Lady Indians, who once again looked the part of a veteran squad. With momentum clearly on the side of the visitors, Union County sophomore Brooke Dockrey stopped the bleeding by stepping to the line during a 1-and-1 situation sinking two clutch free throws with 1:49 to play.

Following a Towns County miss, Lady Panther sophomore Kait McCarter scored off a feed from Brooke Dockrey to open up a 49-42 advantage. Seconds later, the Lady Indians immediately fouled following a costly turnover, sending Bailey Daniel to the line for a 1-and-1. The senior guard hit the first and missed the second but McCarter hauled in the board and delivered a dagger to the Lady Indians with a putback layup.

Leading 52-42, Daniel stacked on two more free throws for good measure with 37 seconds



Senior guard Bailey Daniel led Union County with 16 points in both games last week. Photo/Todd Forrest

remaining to cap off a team-leading 16-point performance to go with 7 rebounds, 6 steals, and 3 assists. Brooke Dockrey finished with 15 points and 4 boards while McCarter scored 6 in the fourth, en route to an 8-point, 6-rebound and 2-steal outing.

Henson led all scorers with 20 points and junior Erika Spano netted 5 for Towns County. No other Lady Indian scored more than three.

Towns County got off to a hot start with five different players reaching the scoring column in the opening period. Playing without junior starter Aubree Pack, Union's only lead of the quarter came on a 3-point play from sophomore Mary Wischmeyer to make it 7-6 at the midway point of the first. It would be short-lived as Kenzie Denton responded with a bucket then Henson nailed a trey to give the Lady Indians an 11-7 advantage. A free throw from Daniel at the 1:21 mark was the final point of the period and Towns County took an 11-8 lead into the second.

Still trailing by three at 17-14, Brooke Dockrey went 1-for-2 from the charity stripe then Andelin Hill rebounded her miss and was fouled on the putback. Hill's and-one finished off a 4-point swing that sparked a 13-0 Union run to close the second quarter.

Moments after her old fashioned 3-pointer, Hill turned a steal into 2 points on the other end for a 20-17 advantage. Up by seven and

1:10 remaining in the half, Daniel got in on the act with a steal-and-score of her own to extend the lead to 26-17. Hill made it a 10-point game with 4 seconds on the clock by splitting a pair of free throws.

Foul trouble began to plague Union County early in the second half as McCarter was tagged with her third personal less than two minutes in. Just over a minute later, Daniel was hit with her third foul, but she would stay in the game and hit two free throws at the 4:38 mark to stretch the lead back to 10 at 33-23.

The Lady Indians cut into the deficit and found themselves down five late in the third until another Daniel steal resulted in a layup and a 41-34 game entering the fourth.

Eight seconds into the fourth, Brooke Dockrey sank two from the line to open up a nine-point advantage but consecutive baskets pulled Towns to within five as the clock ticked under the 5-minute mark.

A basket by McCarter with 3:25 remaining was the only offense by either team during a span of nearly three minutes before Spano pulled Towns County back within three at 45-42 by sinking both attempts of a 1-and-1 at the 2:06 mark.

Wischmeyer ended up with 7 points for Union County while Hill finished with 6 points, 8 boards, and 2 assists. Juniors Adeline Dockrey and Jordan Rogers

scored 2 points apiece with Dockrey pulling down 4 rebounds.

The Lady Panthers overcame 19 turnovers and 0-for-8 3-point shooting by winning the rebound battle 36-24 and shooting 55-percent on 2-point field goals.

The Lady Panthers open region play on Tuesday when they visit rival Fannin County for a 6 p.m. tip off.

The Lady Rebels are currently 4-1 with a 42-35 victory at Towns County last week. They also own a 42-39 victory over Gilmer, who Union County defeated 44-39 on opening night.

Pack, who sat out in the win over Towns County, is expected to return for Fannin County, who split with Union last season thanks to a 45-38 win in Blue Ridge after the Lady Panthers took the first meeting at home 40-36. Union County has won 7-of-10 vs the Lady Rebels since 2012.

On Friday, the Lady Panthers will host No. 2 Rabun County in a rematch beginning at 7 p.m.

**No. 2 Rabun Co. 48, Union Co. 45** - **TIGER** - The Lady Panthers (2-1) fell short Tuesday night at Class AA's second-ranked Rabun County despite a game-high 16 points from Daniel.

Coming off an overtime thriller with Towns County, who Rabun throttled by 30-plus, many were expecting Union to suffer the same fate as the Lady Indians, but what they got was a thriller between a pair of former - and



Sophomore Kait McCarter blocks a shot vs Towns. Photo/Todd Forrest

future - Region 8-AA rivals.

The first half saw Rabun overcome an ice-cold shooting performance with a 12-2 run to close the second quarter after the Lady Panthers opened up a 20-13 advantage at the 3-minute mark. Unfortunately the loss of sophomore guard Brooke Dockrey, who picked up her third foul with 4:03 left in the half, allowed an opportunistic Lady Cat defense to even things up at 22-22. With time winding down, Union County misfired with 5 seconds left, enough time for Rabun to race down the court and beat the buzzer with a heave from just inside halfcourt. Earlier in the night, Rabun was able to corral a Union miss and get up the floor in time to sink a 15-footer as the first quarter horn sounded.

Leading 25-22 to open the third, the Lady Cats opened up their biggest lead of the game at 27-22 before a Daniel free throw and a Brooke Dockrey bucket pulled the Lady Panthers back to within two. Just inside of six minutes with her team trailing 29-27, Brooke Dockrey was tagged with her fourth foul, sending her to the bench until midway through the fourth.

This time Union was able to weather the storm and regained the lead 32-30 when Daniel hit a pair from a breakaway layup attempt off a Lady Cat turnover. With 1:46 left in the third, Wischmeyer sank a pair to give the Lady Panthers a 37-36 lead but Rabun was able to

close with a late fury once again and took a 39-37 advantage into the fourth.

The Lady Cats' up-tempo style appeared to begin taking its toll on Union when they stretched the lead to 46-39 with 5:38 remaining. However, a key momentum swing followed moments later when the Lady Panthers misfired twice from the charity stripe but McCarter was able to gather the offensive board and go back up for two, trimming the deficit to 46-41.

Following a scoreless two minutes, Hill pulled Union to within three with a bucket at the 3:02 mark. Both offenses continued to struggle down the stretch and with 22 seconds to play and Rabun clinging to a 48-43 lead, Daniel drove into the lane and made it a one-possession game at 48-45.

The Lady Cats couldn't hit the front-end of a 1-and-1 situation with 14.9 seconds on the clock but they came down with the board, forcing Brooke Dockrey to use her fifth foul to stop the clock at 0:12. Once again Rabun County missed the front-end but the Lady Panthers were unable to get a good look at a game-tying basket, forcing Union into an off-balance jumper and allowing the home team to preserve the victory.

Georgia Stockton led the Lady Cats with 14 while Stiles finished with 13.

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