

Sports

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Union knocks off Lady Indians; finish sixth at Battle of the States

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Union County's 2013 Battle of the States appearance was highlighted by their fourth straight win over Towns County.

However, nothing went right for the Lady Panthers (8-3) in the other two games.

Dawson County, the defending Class AAA State runner-up, proved to be too much for Union who was playing without junior forward Lisa Nalasci. The Lady Tigers (11-3) went on to win 61-25 and advanced all the way to the Battle of the States title game.

On the second day of the tournament, the Lady Panthers took care of Towns County for the third time in less than a month.

Union not only defeated Towns for the fourth consecutive time, they dominated the hosts in a 53-25 blowout.

On day three, Hokes Bluff, Ala. stood between the Lady Panthers and fifth place but the Lady Eagles held off Union, 42-36.

A back and forth affair shifted in favor of the Lady Eagles (10-4) following a technical foul on the Hokes Bluff bench.

After an intentional foul by the Lady Panthers, the officials decided to take control of things and the scoring grinded to a screeching halt.

With foul trouble mounting for Union in the fourth quarter, Battle of the States All-Tournament selection Brooke Maddox and Ariel Maurer each fouled out of a tightly officiated contest.

"We got blown out, then we won, then we had a game where the officiating wasn't very good," Union Head Coach David Tucker said. "Their kids (Hokes Bluff) were talking trash and we're not used to that, but the thing is, we still had a chance to win."

Now, as the calendar turns to 2014, the Lady Panthers turn their attention to Region 8-AA. Union will travel to Greene County on Friday for a showdown with the defending Region 8-AA runner-up. Last season, the Lady Tigers defeated Union on buzzer beaters.

"That's why you play in these tournaments; to get you ready for the season," Tucker said. "We fought hard. We had some kids who were sick but they still played hard."

The Lady Panthers will travel to Greene on Friday and visit Murphy, NC on Monday, Jan. 6th, still without the services of 8-AA Player of the Year Lauren Zollinger. Although the senior could return sometime next week.

"We got Lauren coming back in the middle of January. I think we're in pretty good shape," Coach Tucker said.

**Dawson County 61
Lady Panthers 25**

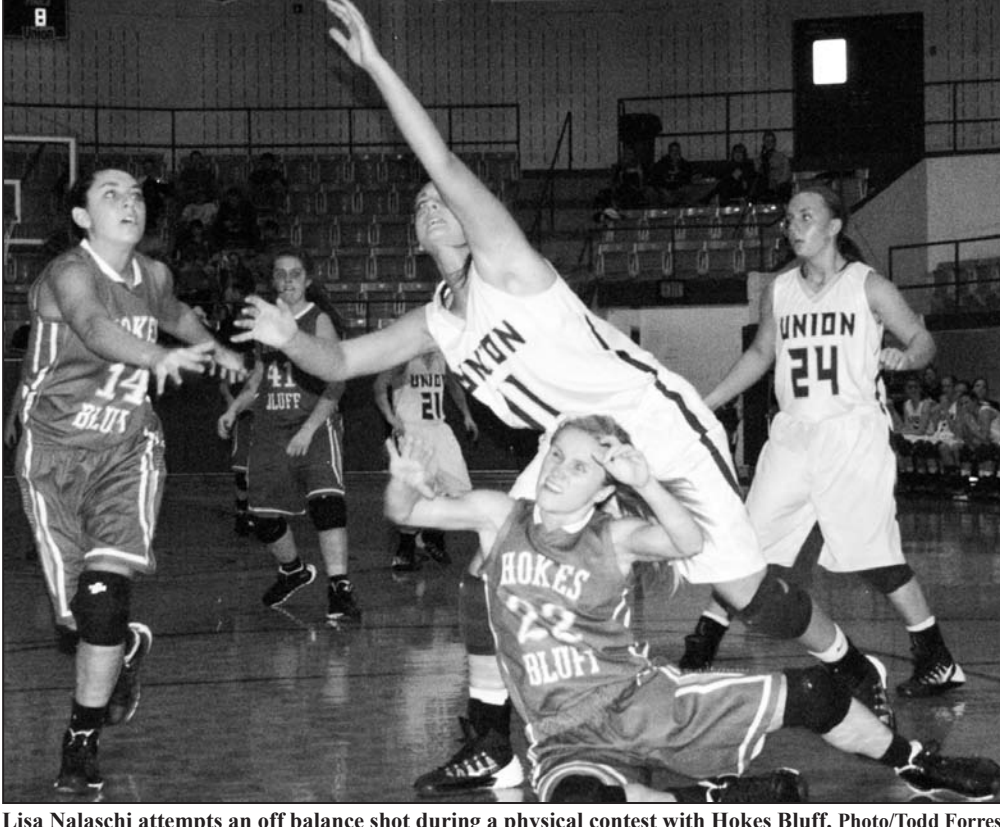
The Lady Tigers jumped out to a 17-7 lead and never looked



Junior Brooke Maddox accepts her All Tournament Team award from Towns County Principal Jonathan Gibson. Photo/Todd Forrest



Junior Ariel Maurer (10) proves that nothing came easy in the paint for either team when Union faced Hokes Bluff. Photo/Todd Forrest



Lisa Nalasci attempts an off balance shot during a physical contest with Hokes Bluff. Photo/Todd Forrest

back. Junior Kaitlyn Day's second trey made it a 19-10 game with 51 seconds to play in the first quarter but the Dawson County defense stepped it up a notch in the second quarter.

Union was held to just four points in both the second quarter and third quarter and the Lady Tigers' raced ahead 39-14 at the break and 59-18 after three.

The Lady Panther starters were shutout in the second frame with sophomores Layne Colwell and Kim Coyne each scoring a basket.

Maddox scored four of her 8 points in the third quarter but that was all Union could muster.

Coyne connected on a corner trey, then crashed the boards for a putback for a 5-point fourth quarter.

Day, who had 2 steals and 2 assists, nailed a three in the final seconds to match Coyne's team high 9 points.

Maddox ended up with 8 points and Colwell had 2 points. Maurer and senior Allie Stroman recorded 2 steals a piece.

Dawson eventually reached the B.O.T.S. championship but ran into an undefeated, but untested Hayesville, NC squad.

When the smoke cleared, the hardware was heading to the Tarheel State. The Lady Jackets pulled off the upset, 70-65, proving

for good. Nalasci returned to the lineup and went to work inside for two more. After a quarter, Union led 12-11.

In the second the Lady Panther defense limited Towns County to just one field goal, sparking a 26-4 run that continued into the third quarter.

With 4:22 to play in the third, Union was on top 38-15. The Lady Indians were able to make it a 38-19 contest but wouldn't get any closer.

The Purple and Gold answered with a 13-2 run to finish off Towns County, for the game and the season.

Maddox poured in 12 of her team high 14 points in the second half, including a lay up with 5:45 to play - making it a 51-21 game. Twenty seconds later, Colwell drove the lane for two to give Union it's largest lead at 53-21.

In the previous meeting with Towns, Union racked up 15 steals. But this time around, the Lady Panthers tallied 20 steals.

Maddox and Nalasci had 5 steals each. Day had 4 steals, Rich finished with three. Junior Madison Larisey, Maurer, and Colwell also got in on the action with one steal each.

Colwell also added a career high 12 points to the Lady Panther victory. Nalasci finished with 9 points, 7 rebounds, and 2 blocks. Day scored 7 points, Rich scored 4 points, Maurer added 3 points and 4 boards, and Stroman chipped in 2 points.

Maddox and Rich led the team with 3 assists each.

Colwell knocked down a trey, giving Union a 6-5 lead.

Towns regained the lead at 9-6 but two free throws from Colwell and a put back by Madison Rich but the Lady Panthers on top

that their 9-0 record is no fluke.

**Lady Panthers 53
Towns County 25**

Things turned around for the Lady Panthers on day two after routing the Lady Indians for the second time in 9 days.

In the early going Union was ice cold. Towns snagged a quick 5-0 lead until Maurer stepped out and drilled a three and offense began to find its groove.

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Panthers take care of Towns County; fall to Dawson, Piedmont Ala.

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Despite losing twice in the Battle of the States tournament, Union County Head Coach Casey Jones is noticing improvement.

"Now were playing well, but only in spurts and you can't do that," Coach Jones said. "You've got to put four quarters together. We're continuing to get better in certain areas, but there are other areas where we need to get better."

The Panthers (6-5) opened with the eventual tournament champion Dawson County, and were able to hang around for most of the game, but the Tigers finished off Union by scoring the last six points of the game in a 59-42 Dawson victory.

Union bounced back by defeating Towns County 66-31 for the 33rd straight win over the Indians. Thirteen different players scored for the Panthers with senior Elijah Ryals leading the charge with a career high 13 points.

The tournament concluded for the Panthers with a 68-61 loss to Piedmont, Ala.

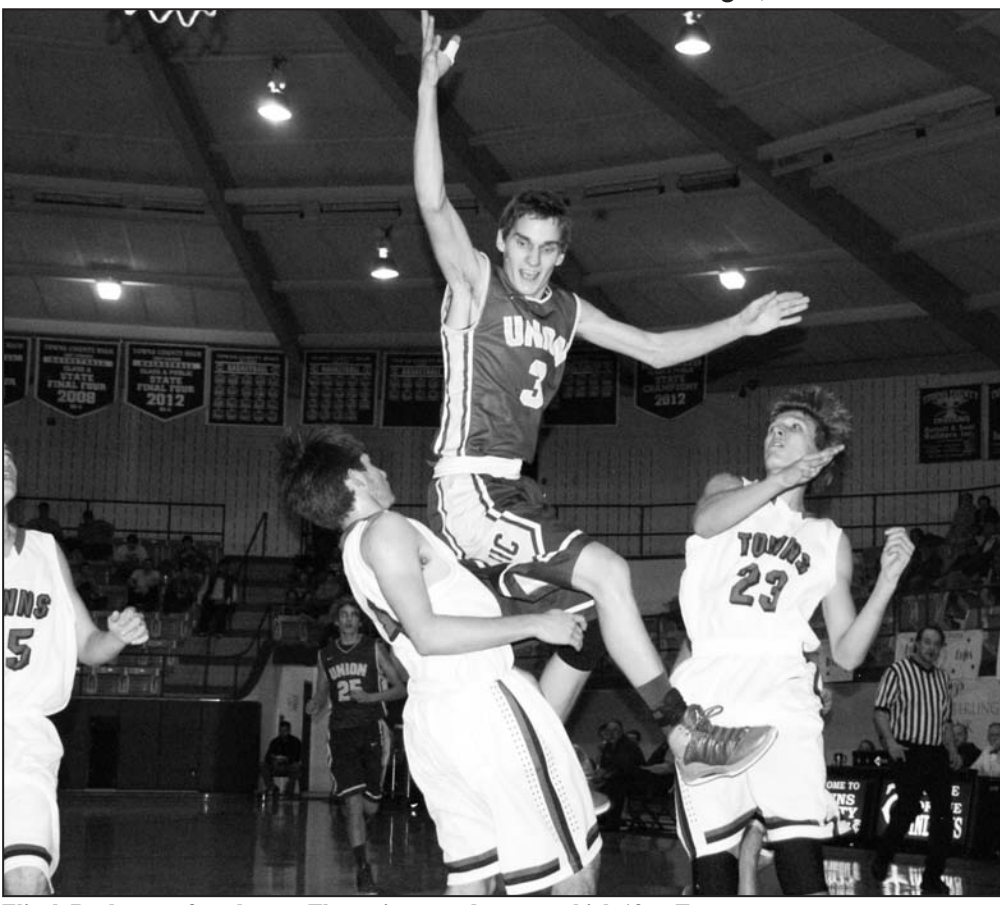
Junior Tyler Odom put up 18 points and was named to the All Tournament team.

The Panthers led 56-55 in the fourth quarter before the Bulldogs outscored Union 13-5 in the final 6 minutes.

**Dawson Co. 59
Panthers 42**

The Tigers opened with an 8-0 run and the Panthers were forced to play catch-up the entire game.

A lay up by junior Hunter Hughes made it an 8-4 game until Dawson surged ahead with a 16-3 run and held a comfortable



Elijah Ryals soars for a lay up. The senior scored a career high 13 vs Towns. Photo/Todd Forrest

lead of 33-19 at the half. Odom and Coyne added 7 points each, and Hamby got 2 points.

Despite the efforts of Hughes, the Panthers were unable to get within 14 points of the Tigers. Dawson extended its lead to 50-27 early in the fourth but Union refused to go away.

Hughes nailed a trey, Dylan Coyne hit two from the stripe, Lake Arnick hit a 15-footer and a corner jumper, Kyle Hamby was 2-for-2 at the line, and Ralston Drake scored off an offensive board and it was a 53-42 game. Unfortunately, time wasn't on the Panthers' side, and Dawson put Union away for good with a 6-0 spurt to close the game.

Hughes finished with 16 points, Arnick had 9 points,

Odom and Coyne added 7 points each, and Hamby got 2 points.

**Panthers 66
Towns Co. 31**

It took Union more than 3 minutes to get on the scoreboard but when they did they poured it on.

The Panthers scored seven straight points to take a 16-8 lead after one.

The second quarter once again was all Union, and the Panthers led 37-16 at the break.

In the third quarter Towns was limited to just four points while Ryals scored five in the quarter, junior Matthew Wasko

had 4 points, Drake and Arnick added two each and sophomore Matthew Rich had a trey.

The fourth quarter was cut to six 6 minutes due to the mercy rule. The Panthers took a 55-20 lead into the fourth and Coach Jones turned to his bench in the final frame. Rich got four more points, sophomore Chase Shook scored 4 points, while sophomore Andrew Brown and junior Logan Baker added 2 points each.

Ryals led the team with 13 points. Wasko scored 8, Hughes and Rich had 7 points a piece. Coyne and Drake finished with 6 points each, Hamby had 5, Shook scored twice on offensive

rebounds for 4 points, freshman Lawson Baeninger hit a trey, Odom got 2 points, and Arnick had 1 point.

Piedmont 68
Panthers 61

Piedmont, Ala. was able to hold off the Panthers in one of the most exciting games of the tournament.



All Tournament team selection Tyler Odom scored 12 of his 18 vs Piedmont, Ala. Photo/Todd Forrest

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Piedmont 68
Panthers 61

Piedmont, Ala. was able to hold off the Panthers in one of the most exciting games of the tournament.

The Bulldogs took an early 6-2 lead but Odom and Ryals led the rally and the Panthers led 18-14 after a quarter of play.

Union was held to 11 points in the third quarter and trailed 34-29. Odom racked up 7 points in the quarter but didn't get much help. Baeninger and Wasko split the other four points of the quarter. But the Panthers charged back with a 7-2 spurt

to tie things up at 34-34 with 7:05 to play. The Eagles pulled ahead 46-38 but the Panthers were not done.

battle that saw a technical foul on Hokes Bluff Coach Jason Shields in the second quarter and an intentional foul on Union in the third.

After losing control of the game, the officials tried to settle things down by calling every single ticky-tack foul.

The Lady Eagles' aggressive style of basketball gave them a quick 8-2 lead.

The Lady Panthers stormed back and a jumper by Maurer tied it up at 17-17. With Union trailing 22-21, the Hokes Bluff coach was whistled for a technical foul.

In a strange turn of events, a referee warned Shields' daughter about continuously hurling insults from the bleachers at the Union players and the officials.

Shields arose from the bench in disagreement. He asked the officials why they were "allowing a 12-year old to get under their skin," and he was immediately teed-up.

"Thank you," was his response to the technical as he sat down.

Basketball would resume and Maddox hit the technical free throws and Union led 23-22 but the Eagles took back the lead at 24-23 entering the break.

"The technical foul hurt us more than it hurt them," Coach Tucker said. "But hey, that's basketball."

Day drove into the paint for two and Union was back on top, 26-25 at the 7-minute mark of the third. With 5:49 left in the quarter, Hokes Bluff retook the lead after a hard foul in the paint was changed to an intentional foul moments later.

The Lady Eagles went 1-for-2 at the line to tie it at 25-25. Then Maddox hit 1-of-2 to put Union ahead 26-25 with 5:07 to play in the third.

With the officiating putting the clamps down, scoring was at a premium for the rest of the game. Hokes Bluff took a 32-28 lead in the third with Union in severe foul trouble. The lead would stretch to 38-31 but a Maddox put back cut it to 38-33 with 3:01 to play.

Maddox fouled out at the 2:18 mark but the Lady Panthers refused to go away. Colwell made it 40-36 with 1:18 to play and the defense was able to get the ball back but Union went ice cold.

The Eagles hit two more free throws while the Lady Panthers continued to misfire as time ran out.

Maddox put up 20 points with 15 coming in the first half before she was plagued by foul trouble late. She also added 3 steals and 2 assists. Day scored 8 points, Nalasci was limited to 4 points, Maurer had 3 points, 8 rebounds, 4 blocks, and 3 steals before fouling out with 26 seconds left. Colwell added 1 point and 1 steal, while Rich picked up 2 steals.

"Anytime you win one game, I feel like it's a good tournament, because we're just getting ready for Region" Tucker said.