

# Sports

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## Lady Panthers fend off Bowdon thanks to 18 from Coyne

### State Sweet 16: Putnam County closes with 13-4 run to spoil Union's upset bid

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The win wasn't pretty, but this time of the year it doesn't matter.

The Union County Lady Panthers have reached the State Tournament every year since 2011 but were 0-for-5 in the first round. But this year they were determined to reverse the trend when they hosted the Bowdon Lady Red Devils. And despite plenty of drama and a roller coaster of emotion on both sides, it was Union County who came out on top, 46-40 in overtime.

Trailing 36-35 with two starters fouled out of the game, senior Kim Coyne forced overtime by hitting 1-of-2 at the free throw line with 11 seconds to play.

In the extra period, Coyne drove to the basket for two, then seconds later, swiped the ball away and went coast-to-coast for another layup that gave her team a 40-36 lead with 2:35 to play in overtime.

At the 1:30 mark, Coyne hit 1-of-2 at the line, then once again, she hit 1-for-2 with 50 seconds left.

The Lady Devils finally got on the board in OT with a 1-for-2 trip to the line with 38 seconds remaining. Five seconds later, sophomore Jillian Lawn came through with a pair of free throws to give Union a 44-37 lead.

"Kim (Coyne) came up with some big steals for us and Jillian came in and hit a three and made two big free throws," Union County Head Coach David Tucker said. "With two girls fouled out, it took a total team effort to get the win."

Bowdon refused to go away and clawed back to within four by knocking down a trey with 18 seconds left.

Needing to put the game away, the Lady Panthers put the ball in the hands of Coyne and with 14 ticks left on the clock, she sealed the W with two free throws.

However, Union came out of the gates ice cold vs Bowdon and for the second consecutive game, scored only five points in the opening frame.

The second quarter saw an improvement offensively, but at the half, the Lady Panthers had just



Senior Stephanie Busse celebrates following Union County's overtime victory over Bowdon. Busse and the rest of the senior class recorded the win in the final home game of their careers. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Kim Coyne on the attack vs Bowdon. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sophomore Bailey Daniel drives to the basket at Putnam as she's being guarded by UMass commit Ebony Hargrove. Photo/Todd Forrest

17 points. Fortunately for the home team, Bowdon was also having difficulties putting points on the board, and if not for a Lady Devils putback at the buzzer, Union would be on top.

Instead, the second half began with Bowdon leading 18-17, but the Lady Panthers laid a 7-0

run on the visitors that gave them a 24-18 advantage with 5:50 to play in the third.

With 3:43 left in the quarter and Union on top 25-20, leading scorer Bailey Daniel was whistled for her third and (a very questionable) fourth foul within 10 seconds of each other.



Senior Layne Colwell looks for room to operate in the paint during last Friday's Sweet 16 contest at Putnam County. Photo/Todd Forrest

With Daniel on the bench, Bowdon regained the lead with a 9-2 run that spanned the remainder of the third and the first 47 seconds of the fourth quarter.

Junior Ashley Fair tied the game by hitting two clutch free throws during a 1-and-1 situation with 6:20 to play.

Daniel returned and made an immediate impact by hitting a three at the 5:55 mark to put her team on top 32-29.

Bowdon responded with consecutive baskets to take a 34-33 lead at the midway point of the fourth.

At the 3:32 mark, Fair was

whistled for her fifth foul but the Lady Devils came up empty on the front end of a 1-and-1.

On the other end, with her team in the bonus, Daniel stepped to the line and sank both attempts of a 1-and-1.

Coyne stretched the Union advantage back to two (35-33) with a 1-for-2 trip to the line at the 1:21 mark.

Union's slight edge was short lived as Bowdon answered with just their second trey of the game, but with a minute left, they couldn't have picked a better moment to find their range.

Trailing 36-35, the Lady Panthers were unable to manufacture a go-ahead bucket and with 16 seconds left, Bowdon secured possession and with Union needing to stop the clock, Daniel picked up her fifth foul.

Daniel's decision to foul may have potentially saved the day as the player she fouled, missed the front end of a 1-and-1. Coyne corralled the rebound and went the length of the court and was fouled on a game-winning shot attempt.

With 11 seconds remain-

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## Panthers end 15 year drought; reach Sweet 16 with win at Bowdon

### No. 1 Thomasville blows things open with 28-5 second quarter following 10-10 tie after one

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**Bowdon** - The Union County men weathered a 12-0 Bowdon run to open the third quarter with a 16-2 run of their own to close out the period and advance to the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2001.

Although they might not admit it, revenge had to be on the minds of some of the players that were on the wrong end of a 56-55 overtime loss to Bowdon on the gridiron of Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium, back in November.

The football game may have provided more total points, but the basketball game ended with a Union County victory on the Red Devils' home court.

The Panthers dictated the pace of play for the majority of the game, forcing Bowdon to play from behind most of the night.

Despite not scoring in the first quarter, sophomore Crawford Colwell went on to score a team-high 21 points.

Senior Chase Shook poured in 15 points while junior Lawson Baenninger added 11.

"I think we matched up pretty well with them," Union County Head Coach Casey Jones said. "They are a very athletic team but we're used to that playing in the region that we do with Greene, Social (Circle), Wilkes and those guys."

Early on Coach Jones went to his big man and Shook scored the first six Union County points.

After Shook began drawing attention around the basket, Baenninger made the defense pay from the outside with a pair of treys to close out the quarter with his team on top at 12-8.

Crawford Colwell found this groove in the second quarter and scored his team's first five points, including an old-fashioned trey. He would go on to finish with 7 points in the period, while Shook and senior



Senior Chase Shook scored 15 in the win at Bowdon. Photo/Todd Forrest



Crawford Colwell led Union with 21 at Bowdon. Photo/Todd Forrest

Andrew Brown added one bucket each.

The Red Devils made their move in the third quarter and had an opportunity to put some distance between themselves and the visitors but the Panthers delivered a 16-2 counter-punch that nearly floored Bowdon.

Crawford Colwell put up 6 points and Shook scored 4 points during the third.

But those two didn't do it by themselves. Baenninger and senior Lance Rich recorded baskets in the period and Brown hit 2-of-2 at the line.

With a 39-32 advantage entering the fourth, the Panthers



Senior Matthew Rich hit a trey at Thomasville. Photo/Todd Forrest



Lawson Baenninger scored 11 in the win at Bowdon. Photo/Todd Forrest

were able to fend off everything that the Red Devils could throw at them.

Crawford Colwell saved the best for last as he delivered 8 points in the final frame.

Baenninger hit 3-of-4 at the line and Lance Rich 1-of-2 in the fourth.

Shook scored three in the quarter with a deuce and 1-for-2 shooting at the charity stripe.

fortunately for the Panthers, they were stuck with the toughest second round draw of anyone in Class AA.

Not only were they taking on the No. 1 team in the State, they had to make a 325 mile (one-way) drive to take on the 27-1 Bulldogs.

The last time the Panthers faced the No. 1 team in Georgia it was in December of 2004 when East Hall came to Blairsville and throttled Union County in a 113-62 loss.

At Thomasville, the Panthers were tied at 10-10 after one quarter but it was all Bulldogs from that point on.

Thomasville would out-score Union 28-5 in the second and 48-14 in the second and third quarters combined as they cruised to a 65-30 victory.

"They are really good, super athletic, very quick, and very big," Coach Jones said. "We played well in the first quarter and took care of the basketball."

"I don't know if they got chewed out by their coach after the first quarter but they came out and really turned the heat up on defense and started shooting the lights out. But you don't get to be No.1 and 28-1 without being a really good basketball team."

Senior Matthew Rich and Baenninger each hit a trey in the first quarter while Shook and Mancuso added one bucket each during the 10-10 period.

Union would score 5 points in the second, nine in the third, and six in the fourth.

Shook led the Panthers with 6 points. Matthew Rich, Crawford Colwell, and Baenninger finished with 5 points each.

Mancuso and Lance Rich scored 4 points each while sophomore Candler Colwell finished with 1 point.

According to Coach Jones, the Panthers' goal was to win 15 games and reach State and they exceeded both those expectations with 16 wins and a Sweet 16 berth.

Thomasville - Unfor-