

Sports

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Union bids farewell to seniors; sweep Social Circle

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Neither Union County soccer team showed any signs of rust following a 14-day lay-off as they took Social Circle behind the woodshed in a pair of 7-0 victories.

Emotions were high on Senior Night, especially for the Lady Panthers (6-1-2, 4-1) who were celebrating the careers of Ema Herum, Erin Innis, and Mary Murphy - three seniors who know a thing or two about winning.

The men's team doesn't have a senior on the roster but that didn't prevent them from stepping up the intensity and completing the Senior Night sweep.

Unlike the Lady Panthers, the Panthers' game was showing all the symptoms of a down-to-the-wire nailbiter. Union County (4-5, 3-2) was able to fire away at the goal but the Redskins' keeper continued to deny shot after shot.

The Panthers finally found a crack late in the first half when Jesus Mancillas connected with the back of the net when Social Circle was unable to clear the zone.

"We started out passing very well but we only managed to notch one goal but we were dominating possession," Union Head Coach Tim Hunter said. "Jesus nailing that first goal was really big and it let us carry momentum into the half."

Union would take that 1-0 lead into the break before blowing things wide open in the second half. Jesus Mancillas fed Brett Dietz for a 2-0 Union lead. Mancillas then found Kyle Hamby for another Panther score and momentum was on the side of the home team for good. Hamby hooked up with freshman Parker McCombs for a goal, and fellow freshman, Lawson Baenninger scored two goals off assists from Jesus Mancillas and Alex Mancillas.

"Kyle was drawing a lot of double teams which freed up Lawson in midfield and he responded," Coach Hunter said.

"Lawson is really just getting adjusted. He didn't get to start until later because our basketball team advanced to state."

John Spaulding scored his first varsity goal on a penalty kick that was set up by freshman Sam Seiler.

"Seiler played a great game," Coach Hunter said. "He found a lot of guys open



Union County Soccer's Class of 2014. Left to right: Erin Innis, Coach Tim Hunter, Ema Herum, and Mary Murphy. Photos/Todd Forrest



Lawson Baenninger



Brett Dietz

and won a penalty kick that John Spaulding scored on. I was very happy for John. He plays the sweeper and fixes so many mistakes, but he doesn't get all the statistical glory that he deserves. I'm glad we were able to get him a goal."

The purple and gold onslaught finally concluded in a 7-0 victory, moving the Panthers to one game above .500 (3-2) in Region play.

"During the half our guys were calm and ready to get back out there and they really exploded in the second half," Coach Hunter said.

Despite some concerns coming into the contest, Coach Hunter and his Panthers squad remain firmly in the mix for one of 8-AA's four playoff spots.

"Our boys have had a lot

against them all season," Coach Hunter said. "We lost keeper Dylan Byers for the season due to a knee injury and we dismissed a starting defender earlier in the week, so I was a little concerned about how we would react, but our young team responded with a fantastic week of practice."

Meanwhile, the Lady Panthers did just the opposite. They put Social Circle away with five first half goals, allowing Coach Hunter to put it cruise control during most of the second half.

"We were more than 100 percent ready for that game," Coach Hunter said. "I knew they would play the high outside trap against us and that was just inviting us to use our speed. I set up a drill that was



Jesus Mancillas scored the only goal of the first 40 minutes. He then tallied 3 assists during Union's second half rout. Photo/Todd Forrest

as close to the game situation as we could be and we got so used to beating that trap that I knew Social Circle was in trouble."

Maddy Morlock scored the first goal of her hat trick and the first Union goal in the 14th minute off a Murphy assist. Camryn Carter found net in the 22nd minute thanks to an assist from Innis. Rachel Vester's hat trick began a minute later off a feed from Morlock, who's second goal made it 4-0, thanks to Innis' assist. Morlock completed her trifecta in the 35th

minute on a Vester assist.

"Maddy and Rachel did a great job up front of not getting caught offside much and timed their runs well," Coach Hunter said. "Maddy set up Rachel with some good passes also. After about 20 minutes their back line was very tired and I knew it was time to score in a flurry. And we did just that, and really separated ourselves from them in the score line."

Vester scored both Union goals in the second half for the hat trick. During the final



Senior Erin Innis



Senior Ema Herum



Senior Mary Murphy

40 minutes, Innis recorded her third assist, Morlock her second, and Carter got into the assist column. All six Lady Panther victories have come via shutout. Union recorded five shutouts during the regular season in both 2012 and 2013.

Herum, Innis, and Murphy have an opportunity to leave Union County High School as one of the most decorated senior classes in the history of Lady Panther soccer.

They are on the verge of wrapping up their third State playoff trip in four years. They have won 40 games and counting with four regular seasons.

See Senior Night, Page 15A

Panthers fall to top ranked Dragons; still control second place

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Jefferson - Union and Jefferson got together last week and in a surprise to no one, the game was low scoring and went down to the wire.

The Dragons moved into the top spot in this week's Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Class AA baseball rankings, and it's only fitting that their first contest atop the poll came against the Panthers.

In the early going Jefferson looked the part of the No. 1 team in the state as they put up three runs in the bottom half of the first inning off Union ace Lane Everett.

"I think we played very well," Union Head Coach Brandon Bradburn said. "They came out and their first four batters reached, which scored three runs before we had an out in the game. We settled down immediately after that and started getting guys out consistently. We weren't rusty, Jefferson just hit very well early. We hit the ball hard the entire game, just right at them."

The Panthers got one back in the second when Jackson Burks took Jefferson's Micah Carpenter deep to centerfield for a solo shot.

The two teams continued to jab at each other for the next five innings but neither could deliver a decisive blow. Union had a chance in the seventh but a leadoff single by Tyler Odom was wasted.

The Panthers left one on in the third, two aboard in the fourth and the sixth inning.

Everett worked five innings, surrendered 9 hits, 3 runs, struck out three and



Junior infielder Jackson Burks recorded two hits at Jefferson, drove in Union's only run, and scored on a solo homer. Photo/Todd Forrest

walked one. He gave way to Odom, who worked a perfect sixth inning.

"Lane showed that he is very tough mentally," Coach Bradburn said. "It would have been easy to cave in after the first, but he has a great head on his shoulders. Lane was on a pitch count, and he was very efficient, so he was able to pitch five innings of the game."

Burks finished 2-for-3 at the plate with a solo homer.

"He looked very good at the plate," Coach Bradburn said. "His second at bat was a very similar hit, but he hit it so

hard off the wall he was limited to a long single."

Hunter Hughes, Jake Sisum, Everett, and Odom each singled for the Panthers. Josh Daniel drew a walk. Up next for Union is a home meeting with Riverside Military Academy on Tuesday at 5 p.m. On Saturday, the Panthers will travel to Washington-Wilkes for a noon doubleheader.

To finish second in 8-AA and host the first round, Union must win all three and hope that Rabun doesn't pull the upset of the year and knock off Jefferson on Tuesday.

Lady Panthers sink Fannin and Lumpkin at Old Union

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The Union County Lady Panthers golf team took care of business once again at Old Union.

Fannin County and Lumpkin County made the trip to Blairsville last Thursday and the Lady Panthers protected their home turf.

Freshman Maddie Horinek paced Union with a 48 and Lydia Gray shot a 51 for Union's overall score of 99. Lumpkin came in with a 105 and Fannin County finished with a 118.

Other golfers for Union were Kacie Godwin, who fired a season-best 54, Emmeline Stuart shot a 67, and Autumn Johnson a 68.

On Wednesday, the Lady Panthers hosted Fannin for the first of two matches with the Lady Rebels. Horinek's total of 41 was a season-best as she combined with Gray's 50 for a team score of 91.

Fannin County finished with a 125 on the day. Godwin shot a 62, Johnson a 65, and Stuart a 72.

The Union County men also hosted Fannin and Murphy, NC on Wednesday and came out on top.

Brett Baker led Union with a 43, Brady Lawn and Colby Jones each posted a 45, and Nathan South had a 46 for an overall score of 179.

Murphy placed second with 183 and Fannin finished at 226.

The Rebels came back on Thursday and this time Jeremy Herum led the Panthers with a season-low 43.

Union totaled 178 and Fannin finished at 224.



Lydia Gray shot a 51 at Old Union last week. Photos/Todd Forrest



Maddie Horinek



Kacie Godwin