

# Panthers score early and often en route to 35-7 victory over Towns

**By Todd Forrest** North Georgia News sports@nganews.com

The 30th meeting between the Panthers and rival Towns County was all Union County as Head Coach Brian Allison's squad put on an offensive display in the first half that left the visiting Indians shell shocked.

The Panthers used a 21-0 first quarter outburst where senior quarterback Joseph Mancuso needed only six offensive plays and a 49-yard punt return for a touchdown to inflict all the damage necessary.

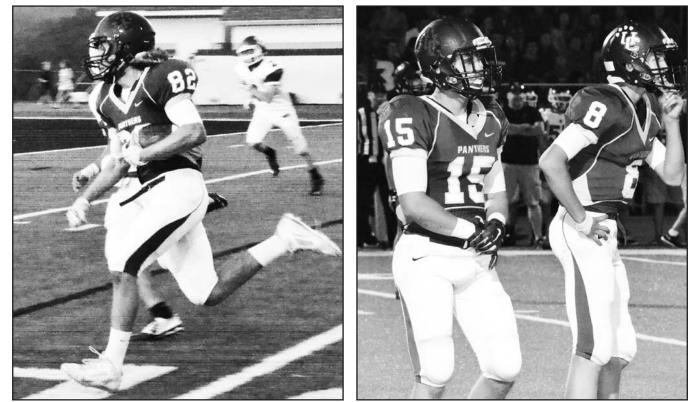
Union went on to take a 35-0 advantage into the half which was good enough for Coach Allison as Mancuso and senior wide out Sam Gilbert watched the second half from the sidelines. The senior pass-catch duo accounted for the majority of the Panthers offensive output for the night, despite playing only two quarters.

Mancuso connected on 10-of-11 passes for 151 yards and a score. On the ground he carried three times for 43 yards and a score. He also had a 62yard touchdown connection to sophomore Cole Wright and a 52 yard scoring carry called back on flags. His one scoring scoring toss was good enough to set the school record for career touchdown passes, passing Kolt Owenby's previous record of 59.

As for Gilbert, he hauled in four catches for 100 yards and one touchdown, just missing a second when he was stopped one yard short on Union's first six-points of the contest.

"The offense was rolling in the first half," Coach Allison said. "It went exactly how we wanted it to go. In the second half we didn't play as well as we needed to play. We're trying to get some experience for Cole Wright at quarterback. We used a couple of different offensive lineman and receivers and that didn't go exactly as planned. But we got some experience in some spots that we needed in preparation for the season."

The Panthers defense was almost perfect in the first half, slamming the door on the Indians wing-T rushing attack, forcing them into five punting situations and stuffing Towns on a 4th-



Left: senior Sam Gilbert races down the near sideline - making it a 28-0 contest. Right: sophomores Cole Dockrey (15) and Cole Wright (8) lead the Union offense in the second half. Dockrey went on to lead the Panthers in rushing. Photos/Todd Forrest

quarter really well too," Coach Allison said. "They got two first downs in the first half."

After starting the game at their own 20 - thanks to one of three touchbacks by senior kicker Knox Kiernan, Union's Purple Swarm limited the Indians to 5 yards and a punt and the Panthers took over with excellent field position at the Towns 40-yard line.

rolled right and found Gilbert, who took the pass and raced to the endzone, but was dragged down at the 1-yard line. On the ensuing play, junior running back Nic Rodriguez powered his was up the gut and following Kiernan's first-of-five point afters, the Panthers were on top 7-0 with 9:26 left in the first.

The defense forced the Indians into another three-and-out and the punt was fielded by senior Josh Daniel, just inside midfield, where he quickly broke a tackle, then cut left and outran Towns' coverage for six points - putting his team on top 14-0 at the 6:31 mark of the period.

"It was awesome," Coach Allison said. "Josh (Daniel) is a and-inches during the second but on a couple of receptions."

The Indians took over on "Defensively we played the 20-yard line and after runs of four and one yard, junior linebacker Chris Thompson broke up a third down pass with Rodriguez putting the heat on Towns quarterback Russell Cox - forcing him out of the pocket.

The Indians punt would go out-of-bounds at the Union 39, where the Panthers took over with 4:47 left in the quarter.

A screen pass lost a yard On the first play, Mancuso on first down but on second down, Mancuso rolled left and hit Wright, who took the pass at the 50-yard line and cut back across the field - cashing in a 61-yard scoring strike. Unfortunately, a flag brought the offense back to the Towns 38-yard line. Sophomore running back Cole Dockrey took a handoff for 11 yards and from the 27-yard line, Mancuso hit Gilbert with a shovel pass that the Panther receiver took around the left end for a 27-yards and the touchdown. With 3:46 still remaining in the first, the rout was on at 21-0.

Once again, the Union defense continued its lights out play, dropping the Indians for a loss on a 3rd-and-2 sweep. The Panthers would field the Towns punt at hard-nosed dude. He broke tackle their own 41-yard line, and that's after tackle, not only on the return where the offense set up shop on its fourth scoring drive.

Rodriguez rushed for 9 yards to open the drive, on 2nd and 1, Mancuso ran behind the left side of the offensive line for 8 more yards, then Union went back to Rodriguez for a 4-yard gain. Facing a 2nd-and-6 on the Towns 38-yard line, Mancuso tossed his only incompletion of the game when he overthrew Wright inside the 20.

The second quarter began with the Panthers facing their first third down of the game but a Mancuso screen pass to Wright went for 7 yards down the far sideline - enough for a first down.

Mancuso fired a screen to Gilbert on the near sideline that was good for 13 yards and moving Union inside the redzone.

The Indians were whistled for offsides, so on 1st-and-5, Mancuso connected with junior Slade Thompson on a comeback route for 5 yards. On second and inches, Towns was flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct, giving Union first and goal at the 5-yard line. The next play saw Mancuso keep it himself and go up the middle for another score.

Trailing 28-0 with 10:36 left before halftime, the Indians put together their only positive drive of the first half when they

line for four consecutive plays leading to gains of 8, 11, 5, and 3 yards. After its first first down of the game, Towns converted a 3rd-and-2 with a 3-yard run at the teeth of the Panthers' defense. However, Union would drop the Indians for a 3-yard loss but a 10-yard scramble by Cox went for 10 yards. Looking at a 3rdand-3, junior Kobe Denton came up just shy of moving the chains. On 4th-and-inches, Denton ran into a brick wall, aka the Panthers defensive front, and Union took over at their own 38 with 5:17 to play before halftime.

On first down, Thompson hauled in a Mancuso pass that went for 15 yards. From their own 48, Mancuso broke loose down the far sideline, finding paydirt from 52 yards away but it was called back due to holding. Now forced to deal with first down and forever, Mancuso went to his right and connected with Gilbert for 19 yards. A screen on second down resulted in a short loss, then a false start put Union in a 3rd-and-23 but Mancuso took a quarterback keeper up the middle for a gain of 30 and a first down.

On the ensuing play, Dockrey slashed and gashed the defense for 32 yards and a score. At ran behind the right side of their the 3:11 mark of the half it was a See Stomping grounds, Pg 15A

The Indians used a 28-yard kickoff return for their best starting field position of the half when the offense took the field at their own 30-yard line. A first down run was dropped behind the line, then a false start pushed them back even further. A one yard gain and a two-yard loss brought up another punting situation but they were able to run out the clock and go the locker room trailing by 35 points.

The third quarter opened with Wright behind center, and on the Panthers' first play, Dockrey broke free for a 21 yard carry. The drive would stall after Dockrey rushed for 2 yards, Kiernan got a yard on a screen pass, and Wright was sacked.

On the Union's first punt of the season, the snap sailed over sophomore RJ Banton's head but he was able to scoop up the loose ball and get the kick away and it was downed at the Indians' 38 yard line.

Towns' first pass completion of the night went for 13 yards on first down, then a sweep was good for 8 more. A false start backed them up five but gains of four and six followed. A 2-yard gain was all the visitors could get on first down but a 28-yard scamper gave the Indians an 1stand-goal at the Panthers' six.

The Union defense refused to bend any further and forced a turnover on downs. Denton went for 4-yards around the left edge but Daniel made a touchdown saving tackle at the 2-yard line. Banton tripped up a Towns ball carrier for a no gain on second down. Cox overthrew his receiver, bringing up fourth down. They went back to the air again but with senior Eddie Kemp defending, the throw missed the intended receiver and the Panthers took over in the shadow of its own goalposts with 4:56 left in the third.

An offsides penalty gave Wright and the offense some breathing room, and a gain of 8 yards by Rodriguez gave Union a first down. The Panthers began moving backwards thanks to a holding penalty and a 5-yard loss on a quarterback keeper that made it 2nd-and-20. A short pass to Daniel went for 40 yards after the senior did most of the damage with his legs. A rough-

# Lady Panthers move to 12-2 overall, 5-0 in 8-AA following perfect week

By Todd Forrest

and Garrett's head and face.

# North Georgia News sports@nganews.com

Union County polished off a 6-0 week by going on the road to Oglethorpe County and sweeping a doubleheader from 8-AA's No. 3 seed in last year's State Tournament by a combined score of 18-5.

Coming on the heels of an 11-0 pounding of the Lady Wildcats at Rabun County and going two-for-two at home vs an overmatched Greene County by scores of 15-0 and 17-0, Union opens September with a 5-0 Region mark - outscoring the 8-AA opposition 61-5 during those five contests.

On Tuesday, the Lady Panthers held off a scrappy White County squad by a 3-2 score, with both squads making play after play in the field. The final big play was made by Union to preserve the victory.

#### Lady Panthers 11 **Rabun County 0**

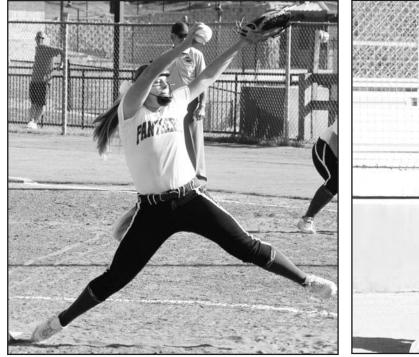
Tiger - The Lady Panthers pounded Region 8-AA rivals Rabun County to the tune of 11 runs and 8 hits in five innings. Meanwhile junior ace Laken Chambers orchestrated a two-hit shutout on 55 pitches - a welcomed relief coming on the heels of a 107-pitch outing just one day earlier vs White County.

Union County scored during each inning, eventually building an insurmountable lead and bringing the mercy rule into play.

Junior Kendra Tanner drew a four-pitch walk and stole second base to open the game. Chambers ripped a one-out base hit to left field – scoring Tanner.

With a 1-run advantage, Chambers surrendered a one-out walk in the bottom half of the first frame but kept the home team in check by getting out of the inning with a pop up.

With one out in Union's half of the second, freshman outfielder Skyler Ludlum reached on a free pass, then sophomore Lydia Arrowood got aboard with a bunt single, setting the table for Tanner. who used an opposite field single to bring in Ludlum. Senior Karley



Junior Laken Chambers fires another shutout at Rabun County last week during an 11-0 victory. Photo/Todd Forrest

Chambers, who was plunked by a -2 pitch that scored Arrowood.

Tanner and Nix crossed the plate when Lawn blew things open with a 2-run single to center making it a 5-0 game.

In the second, Rabun put two runners on but Chambers slammed the door and the Lady Wildcats would never threaten again.

When the Lady Panthers came back to the plate, freshman Aladriel Arnold reached on an error. Two batters later, Arrowood walked and then sophomore Braden Poteete scored Arnold with a double to left. Tanner cleared the bases with a 2-run double to right - opening up an 8-0 Union lead.

Rabun went down quietly in the third and the Lady Panthers put two runners on thanks to a Rabun error and a single from senior Maddie Garrett. Freshman Maddie Sutton entered as a courtesy runner for Garrett and scored along with Lawn when Arnold singled.

Leading 10-0, Union produced another run in the top half of the fifth when sophomore Logan Seabolt walked and eventually scored. Sutton was hit by a pitch, moving Seabolt into scor-

Nix walked to load the bases for ing position. Freshman Madeline Tanner advanced the runners to second and third with a grounder. Sophomore Maci Everett brought Seabolt home with another ground ball.

Rabun went down 1-2-3 in their half of the fifth and the game was called thanks to Union's 11-0 advantage.

Kendra Tanner finished 2-for-2 with 2 runs, 3 RBIs, a double and a walk. Chambers was 1-for-2 with a pair of RBIs, Lawn went 1-for-3 with 2 RBIs and a run, Arnold finished 1-for-3 while driving in two and scoring once. Poteete was 1-for-2, with an RBI double and a run, Arrowood was walked and scored twice while finishing 1-for-1 on the day. Ludlum scored, Garrett went 1-for-4, and Nix walked and scored. Sutton and Seabolt each scored while Everett drove in one run.

### Lady Panthers 3 White County 2

The Class AAAA Lady Warriors may have traveled to Blairsville as underdogs but they gave Union County all they could handle, and then some, thanks to flawless defense and timely hitting. A lucky bounce and a diving tag by Garrett allowed the home



Sophomore Jillian Lawn rips an RBI double to centerfield to put the Lady Panthers on top early vs White County. Photo/Todd Forrest

team to avoid becoming the victim left stranded. of an upset.

Chambers struck out eight and allowed two unearned runs and five hits in 7 innings. The Union County junior also went 3-of-3 at the dish with a pair of doubles and 2 RBIs.

White got a run in the first inning when a passed ball on strike three put a runner on with one out. A pair of steals and a twoout seeing-eye single past a diving Nix made it a 1-0 game.

Coach Jessica Stewart's squad put two runs on the board following a one-out double by Chambers that scored Nix. Lawn would later score courtesy runner Ellie Garrison with a double to center.

Poteete drew a one-out walk in the second, Nix lined a two-out single to right field, and Chambers brought in Poteete with an opposite field single.

Union was later bitten by a double when a leadoff two-bagger resulted in a Lady Warrior run, bringing them within a run, midway through the fourth inning.

Chambers got out of a jam in the fifth following a one-out, White County double. Union's junior ace answered with her second double with one out in the fifth but Garrison, her courtesy runner, was

After a 1-2-3 top of the sixth, Union was unable to capitalize on a two-out base knock by Arrowood.

In the final frame, a mental lapse by the Lady Panthers defense allowed a soft grounder to roll untouched past three defenders. With the tying run on base with one-out, Union made matters worse by awarding the visitors two free bases on a passed ball and a wild pitch. With the tying run now on third, Chambers buckled down and fanned the White County batter with a 3-2 heater.

Coach Stewart and Assistant Coach Kaitlyn Seabolt elected to intentionally walk the Lady Warriors' dangerous lead off hitter, and put the go-ahead runner aboard.

On the first pitch of the intentional walk, Chambers fired the pitch over the catcher Garrett's head and off the backstop. Fortunately, the ball bounced back to Garrett, who scooped it up and dove head-first towards home plate. With arms-outstretched and staring down the bottom of a steel cleat, the senior catcher applied the tag to the sliding base runner, just inches before the Lady Warrior's foot reached home plate,

After the dust settled. Literally. Nix finished with a 2-for-3 day at the plate with a run scored. Meanwhile, Lawn drove in one run while going 1-for-3, Arrowood was also 1-of-3, while Poteete walked and scored.

## Lady Panthers 15 **Greene County 0**

The Lady Panthers picked up two Region 8-AA victories as easily as they come when they demolished Greene County 15-0 and 17-0 in a Thursday afternoon doubleheader with both games being called in the third inning.

In the first meeting, Lawn picked up her second win of the season, fanning seven while not allowing a hit in three innings.

At the plate, Lawn went 2-for-3 with a double and 4 RBIs. Ludlum was 3-for-3 with 3 RBIs. 2 runs, and a double. Freshman Courtney Moose drove in three runs, Arrowood tripled, scored, and knocked in one.

Poteete finished 2-of-2 with 2 runs, and 2 steals. Arnold was 1-for-1 with an RBI, a pair of runs, and a pair of walks, Garrison drove in two runs and scored, Sutton walked twice and scored twice, Chambers was issued two free passes, resulting in a steal and 2 runs, and Nix scored twice as Lawn's courtesy runner.

Union scored 8 runs in the first inning, sending 12 batters to the plate. Poteete singled, Arrowood tripled, Lawn doubled, Arnold singled and stole a base, and Ludlum singled in the first.

Ludlum drove in the Lady Panthers' only run on the second when she brought in Arnold, who walked and stole a base.

Union ended it with 6 runs in the third when Poteete got things started with a leadoff single, Lawn singled, Ludlum doubled, and Moose tripled.

### Lady Panthers 17 **Greene County 0**

Union dished out more of the same in the second contest of a doubleheader - posting 8 runs in the first inning and 9 in the econd.

Madeline Tanner got the

See Perfection, Pg 15A