

Sports

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Ninth ranked Panthers lose game, star quarterback in Tiger

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Tiger - In the much heralded mountain battle between Top 10 teams, Union County and Rabun County, it was all Wildcats as they dropped 42 points on the Panthers in the first half and put 9th ranked Union County away by halftime for the Panthers' lowest scoring output since getting shutout by Washington Wilkes 35-0 in September 2012.

"We just got our tails beat and if you play this game long enough that's going to happen," said Union County Head Coach Brian Allison.

To add injury to insult, Union County's do-everything, All-State quarterback Joseph Mancuso left the game in the second quarter after suffering an apparent serious knee injury.

Late in the first half, Mancuso, who had already been sacked four times on the night thanks to a relentless Wildcat blitz was facing 2nd down and short, he dropped back and fired a pass down the right hash to Cole Wright, as he released the football, with his left leg planted in the earth, an off-balance Rabun County defensive lineman fell into his immobile left leg, rolling him up and sending No. 9 to the turf.

Some say quarterbacks are prima donnas, but Mancuso is the toughest guy on Coach Allison's squad. And no matter how many hits he's taken in his 30 games as the Union QB, he always gets right back to his feet.

But this time he didn't get up. And when it was obvious that their leader was in severe pain, his teammates, who are as close as brothers, were left in a stunned silence on the visitor's sideline.

After Joe Football was taken to a local hospital for treatment, a silver lining was discovered as a sprained MCL, instead of a torn ligament, became a possibility.

However, nothing became official until Tuesday - 24 hours prior to this writing.

"He did get a preliminary report that said it was a sprained MCL," said Coach Allison on Monday morning. "Which is better than what we thought on Friday night. But I really hate to make a comment before we really



Senior QB Joseph Mancuso looks for running room behind the left side of his offensive line at Rabun County. Photo/Todd Forrest

know for sure on Tuesday."

According to Coach Allison, Mancuso suffered an unrelated injury on the Panthers' offense's second play of the game when he found a seam behind the left side of his offensive line and went 29 yards. But instead of finding that next gear like he's done all season, it seemed that he eased up towards the end of the run.

"He got a dead leg on the second play of the game," Coach Allison said. "It was something that definitely limited his mobility."

The incident came after 5th ranked Rabun marched down the field and put seven on the board on the games' opening drive.

The Panthers answered back sparked by Mancuso's 24-yard run and a 33-yard connection to junior Slade Thompson to give Union first and goal at the 7-yard line.

Bo Lynch rushed for three but lost a yard on second down. On third down at the 5-yard line, Mancuso was stuffed for no gain and the Panthers settled for a 27-yard Knox Kiernan field goal.

Rabun quickly made it 14-3 with a 27-yard touchdown run. A Wildcat interception deep

in Panther territory set up an 11-yard touchdown pass, and at the end of one it was 21-3.

Three sacks on Mancuso forced a punt it away and Rabun punched it in with an 8-yard scoring strike.

The Panthers went three-and-out and were forced to punt but this time the Wildcats got to the punter, scooped up the blocked kick and scampered into the endzone to make it a 35-3 game with 6 minutes left before the half.

Rabun tacked on a 19-yard scoring run at the 3:57 mark before Mancuso was hurt with his team down 42-7.

Another score came in the third quarter with the running clock in effect for the entire second half.

"I knew they were going to be good on defense, but they were really good defensively," Coach Allison said. "Offensively they created some mismatches. They put (Charlie) Woerner (receiver) on (corner back) Josh Daniel and he's a great deal bigger than him. As coaches, we could have probably done a better job scheme-wise and do some things to help Josh."

With Wright taking over at



Matthew Beise (53), Tyler McCoy (14) and Chandler Day (67) drag down a Rabun County running back in the early stages of last Friday night's road contest. Photo/Todd Forrest



While senior captains Joseph Mancuso and Chris Drost are at midfield for the coin toss, the remaining seniors wait behind them as co-captains. Photo/Todd Forrest

quarterback, his teammates quickly rallied around their backup, just as they did for their fallen brother. Moving forward, Coach Allison has no doubt that his Panthers will have the sophomore's back.

"They love Cole," Coach Allison said. "There is no doubt in my mind that they will rally and give it their all the same as they

did for Joe."

The Panthers will benefit from a bye week this week before hosting Riverside Military Academy for Senior Night on Oct. 30th.

"It's going to be a light week and we're going to try and get some recovery time in," Coach Allison said. "Cole has

been fighting a pulled hip muscle for about six weeks now. So we're going to stick to the plan, lighten some things up, and not go out there and beat the heck out of them."

Around the region this week, Rabun hosts Washington Wilkes in a battle of the only two undefeated teams left in 8-AA.

Union fends off Bowdon; will meet Lamar Co. in Sweet 16

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The Lady Panthers improved to 23-7 and are advancing to the State Sweet 16 for the second consecutive season following a two-game sweep of Bowdon. The victories were also a wrap on Union County home games where they finished on a 15-game home winning streak with a 12-0 record this season - the first undefeated home record in team history.

On Wednesday, the Lady Panthers will travel to Barnesville to take on Lamar County (16-12), the champions from Region 4.

The winner of the best-of-three series will advance to the Elite 8 in Columbus.

**Lady Panthers 1
Bowdon 0**

Junior Laken Chambers struck out 10 in a one-hit shutout of Bowdon in Game One of the Class AA State Tournament's first round. She also came through at the plate with a two-out game winning RBI single in the bottom of the sixth.

Bowdon opened the game with a single and didn't record a hit for the remainder of the game. They put a runner on in the third with a one-out walk, drew a leadoff walk in the fourth, and reached on an error with one-out in the fifth before Chambers slammed the door by sitting the visitors down 1-2-3 in the sixth and seventh innings.

On the other hand, Union County didn't put a runner aboard until junior Lydia Arrowood reached on an error with two down in the second. That would be the Lady Panthers' only base runner until the sixth inning, when they managed the game's only run.

Junior Braden Poteete laid down a bunt and used her



Junior Laken Chambers drives in the game winning run in the first game vs Bowdon. She also pitched a one-hitter. Photo/Todd Forrest

speed to force an errant throw to first. She then caught the defense napping and swiped second to put a runner in scoring position with one out.

After a strikeout, senior Karley Nix legged out an infield single and Chambers laced the first pitch of the at bat back up the middle - scoring Poteete. Chambers would then strike out the side in the seventh to give Union County a one-game-to-nothing lead in the best-of-three series.

"I felt like Bowdon would be a good team and they were," said Union County Head Coach Jessica Stewart. "They struggled hitting Laken in the first game, as we did their pitcher, but we happened to have a few clutch hits and won the game."

**Lady Panthers 6
Bowdon 4**

After mustering three hits between the two teams in the first meeting, the offenses had the advantage in

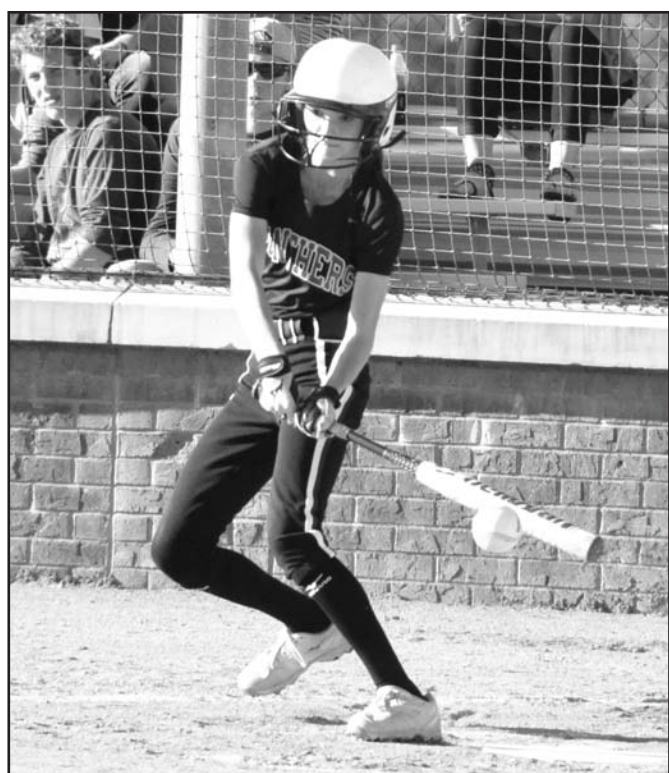
Game Two, pounding out 21 hits with Union accounting for 14.

In the early going it looked like the Lady Panthers might run away with the second game with a run in the first and three more in the second.

Junior Kendra Tanner and Chambers each singled in the top half of the first and senior Maddie Garrett drew a two-out free pass to load the bases. Arrowood picked up an RBI when she drew a bases loaded walk to make it a 1-0 game.

Bowdon opened the bottom of the first with a leadoff double followed by a single to put two runners in scoring position. However, Chambers got out of the jam with a pair of strikeouts and a ground out.

Freshman Aladriel Arnold was hit by a pitch to lead-off the second, and following a ground out, Tanner singled to put runners at the corners. Nix scored Arnold with a bunt



Sophomore Braden Poteete delivers in the clutch by getting the 6th inning started so Chambers could drive her in. Photo/Todd Forrest

single and Chambers doubled to score Tanner and Nix.

In the third, Poteete, Tanner, and Nix loaded the bases with two outs with three consecutive infield singles but the Lady Panthers were unable to come up with a two-out RBI.

A base hit, an error, and another single made it a 4-2 game with nobody out in the bottom of the third. Another error and a wild pitch allowed the base runner to advance to third, where she scored on an infield single.

Chambers got of trouble with a strikeout and a pair of ground outs but Bowdon was back in the game, only down a run.

A base hit by Lawn opened the fourth and with Logan Seabolt running, a grounder to third got her to second. A sacrifice by Arrowood moved her to third but a ground ball to third ended the threat.

Tanner walked and Nix singled to right with two outs

in the fifth but Tanner was thrown out at the plate when Nix stole second and she tried to score on the throw.

A leadoff single and a wild pitch put Bowdon's tying run in scoring position with nobody out. A pair of sacrifice flies advanced the runner to third and then home, tying the contest at 4-4 going into the sixth.

Chambers and Lawn opened the inning with base hits and Garrett loaded the bases when she laid down a perfectly timed bunt.

After fouling off five straight pitches, Arrowood scored courtesy runner Sutton with a grounder up the middle where the only play the short-stop could make was a force at second.

Freshman Ellie Garrison flied out to deep center, allowing Lawn to tag and score, making it a 6-4 game.

Chambers worked around a two-out single in the sixth and the Lady Panthers missed out on a scoring

opportunity when Tanner was cut down at the plate trying to score on a Nix single.

Still clinging to a 2-run lead, Chambers got a strikeout and a fly out to open the seventh, before a two-out walk brought the tying run to the plate but the Lady Panthers' ace fanned the next hitter to send her squad to the Sweet 16 in Lamar County (Barnesville).

Chambers struck out eight in 7 innings, while surrendering 2 earned runs. At the plate, she was 3-for-4 with 2 RBIs and a double.

Tanner finished with a 3-for-4 game with 2 runs and a walk. Nix was 4-for-5 with a run and an RBI. Arrowood drove in 2 runs, Lawn had a pair of hits, Garrett and Poteete singled, while Arnold and Sutton each scored once.

Region 8-AA title game

**Lady Panthers 0
Social Circle 2**

Social Circle - Union County's struggles with the Lady Redskins continued in the Region 8-AA Championship last Monday, Oct. 12th.

Social Circle won its third consecutive region title despite only 3 hits, but the Lady Panthers committed four infield errors while only mustering one hit offensively.

Chambers struck out five, allowing two unearned runs in six innings of work.

The first five hitters in the Union County lineup were a combined 0-for-14 with 6 strikeouts. Arrowood delivered her team's only hit of the day, a leadoff single to center in the top of the fifth inning.

Chambers reached on an error in the first and the Lady Redskins got a leadoff single in their half of the inning but neither team was able to cause any damage.

Arrowood drew a one-

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