

Not pretty, but Union gets 29th straight | Lady Panthers overwhelmed at Towns

By Todd Forrest North Georgia News sports@nganews.com

HIAWASSEE - After

a 23-11 first quarter, Union County's (5-0) offense sputtered, but it was still enough to pick up their 29th straight victory over the Towns County Indians (0-3) by a score of 48-38

With one of its key starters out of the lineup due to illness, Union appeared to be in prime position to put the Indians away early.

However that wasn't the case as Towns limited Union to just 25 points in the final three quarters.

"Sometimes the easy ones turn out to be the hard ones," Union County Head Coach David Tucker said. 'We're now 5-0 and we did it on the road so I'll take it."

The Panther offense was running on all cylinders early as Zach Odom and Rhett McCombs scored 7 points each in the opening frame. CJ Byers added 4, Dylan Coyne had 3, and James Rowe added two free-throws and Union looked to be in the driver's seat.

Zach Odom opened the second quarter with a corner trey, McCombs added two quick lay ups, followed by a Coyne lay up that gave Union a commanding 32-15 lead with 2:26 left before the half.

An Indian bucket got Towns to within 15 points at



Dylan Coyne battles for one of his 13 rebounds at Towns County. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

32-17 at halftime but Union still missed a golden opportunity to put the home team away.

The second half got off to a promising start as Coyne and Byers scored in the paint, giving Union its largest lead at 36-17, just under two minutes into the second half.

Towns rattled off 5-straight points before Byers stopped the bleeding with an offensive board resulting in a bucket.

McCombs scored on a driving lay in and Union still led comfortably, 40-23 midway through the third quarter.

The Indians sliced the Panther lead down to 12 but Byers again kept Towns County at bay with a baseline jumper in giving Union a 42-28 lead after three.

An Indian basket at the 6:33 mark was followed by a free throw 21 seconds later to make it an 11-point game.

A lay-up by Rowe, a lay in from Coyne, and a put back bucket from Rowe gave the Panthers a secure 48-31 lead with 2:55 left in the game.

Union wouldn't score again but it was enough to hold up as the Indians ran out of time before they could challenge.

Seven straight Indian points to close the game weren't enough to sway the outcome, but enough to give the Panthers something to think about when they host the Indians on Dec. 15th

McCombs and Zach Odom led the way for the second straight game with 13 points each. Zach Odom also had 5 assists and 5 steals.

Coyne had another solid game on the boards, collecting 13 rebounds and scoring all 8 of his points in the paint.

"Dylan has been unbelievable with his rebounding and defense," Coach Tucker said.

Byers had his best outing of the year so far, picking up 10 points, 6 rebounds, and 3 blocked shots. Rowe added 6 points and 6 boards to round out the Panther scoring.

The Panthers are off to their best start since 2010-11 and are 5-0 for just the third time since 1998.

The Panthers play host the final seconds of the quarter, to White County on Tuesday night before heading to Lumpkin County on Friday.

By Todd Forrest North Georgia News sports@nganews.com

HIAWASSEE - A 16-7 second quarter run by the Towns County Lady Indians (3-0) put Union County in an insurmountable 25-15 hole at the break.

The Lady Panthers never recovered as Towns County ran away in a 62-41 victory. Towns has now won five of the last six meetings with Union.

Following two impressive games, Union's Lauren Zollinger was limited to just 3 points and 2 assists, while committing 9 turnovers in the teeth of Lady Indian double teams all evening.

The Lady Panthers didn't trail the entire contest. A Carly Adams bucket was followed up by a lay in from Shawnna Brown, giving Union an early edge at 7-4. Adams added a free throw with 3:18 to play in the first quarter but a Lady Indian trey gave Towns the lead at the 2:25 mark of the first.

Towns stretched its lead thanks to a 7-0 run to open the second quarter. A Hannah Hughes trey would make it a 16-11 game, but that's as close as Union would get.

The Lady Indians would continue to pull away in the third quarter thanks to a 10-2 run to open the half.

Hughes was able to keep Union in the game for a few moments thanks to 7 third quarter points, but Union was dealt a blow when Jeanelle Arnold



Hannah Hughes drives for two of her team high 15 points at Towns. Photo/Lowell Nicholson picked up her fifth foul at the 4 minute mark of the quarter.

Brown and Adams helped keep Union within striking distance with consecutive buckets but it wasn't enough, and Towns maintained a comfortable margin entering the fourth at 41-27.

Things began to get out of hand for Union County in the fourth when Towns took advantage of a 15-3 run to take a 56-30 lead with 5:37 to play.

Most of the Lady Indians' damage came from free throws, turnovers, and offensive boards as Union was unable to withstand a furious Lady Indian attack on both ends of the floor.

A 3-pointer from Kaitlyn Day got Union within 20 at 59-39 with 1:18 remaining in ations like this early in the the game. An Allie Stroman

jumper in the final seconds were Union's final points of the evening.

Lisa Nalaschi and Camryn Carter each found their way into the scoring column with a bucket in the fourth quarter.

Union was led by Hughes' 15 points, a career high that surpassed the 14 points the senior scored against Hiwassee Dam earlier in the season.

Adams had another solid, all-around performance scoring 6 points, grabbing 6 boards, along with 2 steals and 2 assists.

Brown scored 4 points and had 3 steals. Arnold added 2 points, 2 assists, and 2 steals. Ariel Maurer continued to control the paint with 8 rebounds and 2 blocked shots.

Union County Head Coach David Tucker is ready for his girls to get back to work before facing Class AAA's White County and Class AAAA's Lumpkin County this week

"We've got to take some time to work on the little things," Coach Tucker said. We missed wide open shots and weren't doing what we did at walk through today. But we'll work on it, and fix a few things.

With Towns being off on Friday night, Coach Tucker wasn't using Union's tough game against Fannin on Friday as an excuse.

"That's basketball. I want to put us in tough situyear," he said.

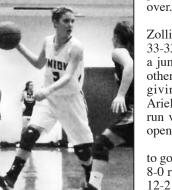
Lady Panthers outlast Fannin

By Todd Forrest North Georgia News sports@nganews.com

Union County's Lauren Zollinger wrote her own chapter in the rivalry between Union County (4-0) and Fannin County (3-2) on Friday night.

The junior scored a career-high 26 points and propelled Union's decisive 11-0 stretch in the third quarter. Zollinger contributed 9 of the run's 11 points as the Lady Panthers defeated Fannin 57-44, for Union's fourth consecutive win over Fannin - something the Lady Panthers haven't done

in almost 30 years. A storied program like



Lauren Zollinger vs Fannin County. Photo/Todd Forrest

A Fannin bucket was answered by a Hannah Hughes trey to give Union its first lead

point guard decided to take

A driving lay-up by Zollinger evened the score at 33-33 before she hit a 3-pointer, a jumper in the paint, and another trey from the left wing, giving Union a 41-33 lead. Ariel Maurer polished off the run with a baseline jumper to open up a double-digit lead.

However, Fannin refused to go away quietly and used an 8-0 run to get within two but a 12-2 Lady Panther run to close the game sealed the win

Maddox hit 3-of-4 from the line to give Union some breathing room. Then a freethrow from Maurer and a put back by Madison Rich put Union ahead by 7 points with 4:49 to play until Zollinger's fifth trey put the game on ice. "It was a game of runs but we're still not sure of ourselves," Coach David Tucker said. "But overall I was pleased with the performance.' Zollinger finished with 7 steals and 4 assists to go along with her 26 points. Maddox scored 8 points with 3 steals, Jeanelle Arnold had 6 points and 5 steals, Hughes also chipped in 6 points. Maurer recorded 7 blocked shots for the second straight contest and added 3 points. Brown finished with 4 points and 5 boards, while Rich scored 4 points with 4 boards in the Lady Panther victory.

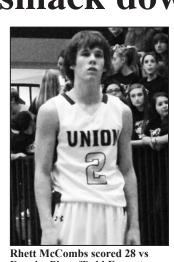
Panthers smack down Rebels

By Todd Forrest North Georgia News sports@nganews.com

The one-two punch of senior guards Zach Odom and Rhett McCombs combined for 33 of Union's 39 first half points as the Panthers pulled away early and cruised to a 60-32 victory over Fannin County (3-2).

McCombs scored a season high 28 points (23 in first half) while Zach Odom added another season high with 17 points, including four treys.

After a McCombs steal and lay in made it a 9-5 game, a Fannin trey moved the Rebels within a point with 3:02 to play



Fannin. Photo/Todd Forrest 3-pointer from the wing to open the second period. Two in the fourth. at the charity stripe from Dylan

3:18 mark of the third quarter.

A Rebel trey didn't go unanswered as Union's fullcourt defense put the clamps down on the visitors. Coyne scored off a Fannin turnover, Zach Odom nailed a trey from the wing, then 18 seconds later, he converted another steal into two more Panther points. Entering the final frame, Union had doubled-up the Rebels 50-25.

Senior CJ Byers snatched an offensive rebound and connected on a baseline jumper, less than 70 seconds into the fourth quarter. Byers would add a free-throw 28 seconds later, giving Union a 53-25 lead early

McCombs added three

the Fannin County Lady Rebels wouldn't travel to Blairsville and not bring their A-game, and that's exactly what Union was up against early in the contest.

Fannin County connected on six of it's first seven shots to open a 16-7 lead with 3:08 to play in the opening frame.

The Lady Panthers threw 7 unanswered points back at the Lady Rebels before Fannin scored to make it an 18-14 game after one.

In the second quarter, a Zollinger jumper made it 18-16 before she picked off a Fannin pass and took it coast-to-coast for a lay in, knotting the score at 18-18 with 6:23 left in the first half.

at 21-20.

Moments later, Fannin went back on top, but Brooke Maddox's corner trey put Union ahead, 24-23. The sophomore would find her way into the paint on Union's next possession, giving the Lady Panthers a 26-23 lead.

Zollinger finished off her 7-point quarter with a 20footer from the top of the key, putting Union ahead 29-25 at the break.

After a corner jumper from Shawnna Brown gave Union a 31-26 lead, Fannin responded with a 7-0 run to retake the lead at 33-31 with 3:18 to go in the third quarter.

That's when Union's

in the first.

The Rebels never threatened again.

McCombs nailed a 3-pointer that was followed by a free throw from Zach Odom. Another McCombs steal turned into an and-1, then Zach Odom nailed a trey at the buzzer to put Union ahead 19-9 after one.

McCombs would continue to pace the Panthers with 13 points in the second frame as Union opened the quarter with a 17-1 run. Union's early outburst ended any hopes that Fannin had of preventing their four-game losing skid against the Panthers from turning into five games.

Zach Odom nailed a

Coyne made it a 24-9 game at the 7-minute mark of the half.

McCombs took it from there, hitting three treys and scoring 11 of Union's next 13 points to give the Panthers a commanding 37-13 lead at the break.

The Rebels came out of the gates strong in the second half with an 8-0 run to get within 37-21 with 5:21 left in the third quarter.

Union got on the board 20 seconds later when a Mc-Combs lay-up ended the Fannin run

Zach Odom hit 2-for-2 from the line and Dylan Coyne scored on a put back and the Panthers found themselves clearly in control at 43-21 at the

more free throws, giving the Panthers their largest lead at 56-25 with 5:57 to play.

Tyler Odom scored all three of his points in the final minutes and Ralston Drake added a late free throw for the Panthers

McCombs grabbed five boards and dished out five assists to compliment his 28-point outing

Coyne scored 6 points, while snagging a game-high 11 boards, grabbing 3 steals and blocking a shot.

Byers added 3 points and Thomas Danek had a point.

James Rowe finished with only 1 point but had a game-high 6 steals.

Rowe leads Panthers past Andrews

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ANDREWS, NC-Union

County (3-0) held off a late rally from Andrews to escape with a 55-44 victory.

James Rowe picked up another double-double while pouring in 14 of his 18 points in the second half after Union held a slim 25-20 lead at the break.

After demolishing Andrews by 51 points eight days earlier in Union's most lopsided win in nearly five years (Towns County, 81-21 in December 2007), the Panthers faced some tough sledding in Western North Carolina on Tuesday.

Following an early put back score from Dylan Coyne, a Rhett McCombs jumper gave Union a 10-2 lead with 1:15 remaining in the first quarter. A pair of Wildcat free throws got Andrews within 10-6 until Rowe scored in the paint to give the Panthers a 12-6 lead after one quarter.

Thomas Danek, Zach Odom, and CJ Byers stretched Union's lead to 18-8 midway through the second quarter until two more from the stripe



Rowe hits one of his three treys at Andrews. Photo/Todd Forrest

got Andrews within eight at the 3:55 mark. The Odom brothers put Union on top 23-10 with a trey from Zach Odom and two free-throws from Tyler Odom. Two more from the stripe by Tyler Odom nudged the Panthers ahead 25-14 with a minute to play in the second. But back-to-back treys from Andrews in the final 35 seconds made it a 5-point game to 3-0 for the third time since at the half.

The Panthers responded with a 16-5 third quarter run,

ignited by 6 points from Rowe and 5 by McCombs.

A free-throw from Danek, and a trey, along with an and-1 from Rowe gave Union its largest lead of the game at 48-29 with 5:45 to play.

A 13-2 Wildcat burst pulled them to within 8 points with 55 seconds left before three free throws from Mc-Combs and two from Zach Odom sealed the deal.

Rowe's 18 points were accompanied by 11 rebounds and 2 steals. McCombs finished with 16, Zach Odom provided a steady 10 points and 6 assists.

Tyler Odom scored 4 points, Danek had 3 points and a blocked shot, while Byers chipped in 2 points.

Coyne had 2 points, 10 rebounds, and 2 steals.

After beating Andrews by 51 at home, Coach Tucker was pleased to pick up his team's first road win.

'Anything can happen during a road game," Coach Tucker said. "I'm just pleased with the win."

Union County improved the 2004-2005 season and haven't lost to Andrews in more than seven years.

Lady Panther shooters sink Andrews

By Todd Forrest North Georgia News sports@nganews.com

ANDREWS, NC - Junior Lauren Zollinger went for 20 points and 4 rebounds in three quarters as the Union County Lady Panthers improved to 3-0 for the third consecutive season

Ten 3-pointers and an 18-4 second quarter run propelled Union to a comfortable 68-34 victory over the Andrews Lady Wildcats on Tuesday.

A balanced scoring attack allowed Union to leap out to a 21-8 lead after one quarter. Sophomore Brooke Maddox picked up where she left off against Hiwassee Dam by scoring 8 points in the opening frame, along with 5 points from Zollinger.

Trailing 3-2 early, a threeball from Jeanelle Arnold gave Union the lead and the Lady Panthers never looked back. Arnold, along with Hannah Hughes would eventually foul out, but the bench picked up the slack as a total of nine Lady Panthers reached the scoring column.

Union's second quarter outburst was sparked by 9 points from Madison Rich. The junior guard went 4-for-4 from the



Madison Rich scored a career-high 12 pts at Andrews. Photo/Todd Forrest compliment her 3-for-3 performance in the first quarter, to lead her team to a 39-12 halftime advantage

Zollinger would then close out the Lady Wildcats with an offensive onslaught in the third quarter. The Lady Panther point guard scored at will, early and often. Following a trey by Carly Adams, a bucket from Shawnna Brown, and an Arnold free-throw, Zollinger drove to the basket, scored and was fouled. Her free throw was good and Union stretched its lead to 48-14 with 5:36 to play in the third quarter.

But she wasn't finished. Zollinger hit consecutive charity stripe in the quarter to treys, then attacked the basket

for another four points, giving her 13-straight points to close the third quarter with Union leading 58-26.

The final frame saw Kaitlyn Day score 5 points, Lisa Nalaschi pick up 4 points and block 3 shots, and Allie Stroman add a free throw.

Ariel Maurer didn't record a point but led the team with 7 blocked shots, while grabbing 4 boards and dishing out 3 assists.

Rich scored a careerhigh 12 points, while Maddox finished with 10 points and a game-high 6 steals. Brown had 7 points and 4 boards, Adams scored 5 points to go along with 5 boards and 2 assists, and Arnold added 4 points despite battling foul trouble all evening.

Despite knowing what to expect from Andrews, Coach David Tucker was interested to see how his young team would respond in its first road contest.

'It's a road win and I'll take it," Coach Tucker said. "I feel like we're getting better and will continue to get better."

Zollinger's 20-point outing gave her two 20-point performances in three games both at the expense of the Lady Wildcats. Union will host Andrews one more time on Jan. 12th.