

Sports

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Lady Panthers knock off Lakeview, Hayesville; give Dawson a scare

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With one more week of action before the Christmas Break and the annual Battle of the States Christmas Tournament, the Union County ladies are starting to peak.

The Lady Panthers faced off with three quality opponents last week and came away with a 2-1 record.

Union easily handled Lakeview who reached State in Class A Private last season. On Friday, the Lady Panthers took unbeaten Dawson to the wire before the Lady Tigers' clutch shooting preserved the victory in Dawsonville.

Finally, Union took down Hayesville, NC, who defeated Dawson in the Battle of the States Finals before reaching the State Final Four.

This week Union will host Towns at 7 p.m. on Friday and Oglethorpe County on Saturday at 3 p.m. as Region 8-AA action gets underway.

Lady Panthers 62 Lakeview 41

The Union County Lady Panthers continued to wield the hot hand from beyond the arc with a 12-trey performance during a 62-41 pummeling of Lakeview Academy, coming on the heels of a 41-point victory over Towns County that saw the Lady Panthers connect 13 times from long distance.

After disposing the Lady Indians an Elite 8 squad from Region 8-A with a shooting barrage, Union's encore came by way of 22 steals at the expense of Lakeview — a 20-win, State Playoff squad who also resides in Region 8-A.

But unlike the Towns County game where the Lady Panthers came out firing on all cylinders and led 14-0, the Lady Lions scored the game's first seven points and kept a goose egg in Union's scoring column until a Brooke Maddox free throw at the 5:03 mark of the first quarter made it a 7-1 game.

Thirteen seconds later, Maddox turned a steal into an easy layup but Lakeview added a deuce on its ensuing possession — stretching its lead back to six points at 9-3. Maddox went on to lead all scorers with 20 points to go with 8 steals on the night.

Layne Colwell nailed her team's first and only trey of the quarter to get Union within three but the Lady Lions connected on their second trey to double up the Lady Panthers at 12-6.

A short jumper by Colwell and a coast-to-coast layup from Kaitlyn Day trimmed the Lakeview lead to 12-10 before a Colwell



Junior Stephanie Busse with a block vs Lakeview. Photo/Todd Forrest

steal resulted in two free throws for the Union County junior and knotted the game at 12-12 after one period.

The second quarter belonged to home team as Coach David Tucker's squad put on a shooting-clinic with five treys, resulting in the Lady Panthers scoring 23 of the game's next 29 points.

Less than 45 seconds into the second frame, Maddox hit a trey for Union's first lead of the game. Day pushed the lead to 17-12, and then 20-12, by driving inside for two before finding her range on the next possession with a three.

With just over four minutes to play before halftime, Lisa Nalascchi turned an offensive rebound into two points that was followed by a corner-trey by Colwell that capped off a 12-0 Union run.

Lakeview got its first points of the quarter at the 3:31 mark to trim the Lady Panthers' lead back to 11 but Stephanie Busse hit two from the line after Colwell kept the possession alive with an offensive board.

Maddox connected on another 3-pointer then added layup off a turnover for a 32-18 Union advantage. Sophomore Holly Stroman got in on the action with a three-ball during the quarter's final minute as the Lady Panthers took a 35-19 lead into the break.

The second half scoring opened with a three from Day off an inbounds pass before Lakeview

scored five-unanswered. Stroman knocked down her second trey at the 4:20 mark and Maddox connected from deep with just over two minutes left in the third. Nine points off three treys was all the scoring that Union got in the third but it was enough to maintain the upper hand at 44-31 entering the fourth.

Maddox opened the final frame with a putback for two and a trey from the wing that gave her squad a 49-31 edge. Still the Lady Lions refused to get away and used a 5-0 spurt to get back within 13 points at the 5:36 mark.

Finally, with just over four minutes to play, the Lady Panthers put the visitors in a stranglehold. Nalascchi got in on the 3-point barrage with her first trey of the night. After a stop on the defensive end, Maddox was hacked on her way to the basket and hit 1-of-2 at the line. Union forced another turnover and Day delivered the knockout blow with a trey to open up a 20-point lead at the 3:48 mark. Then, 68 seconds later, the lead increased to 58-36 when Nalascchi turned an offensive board into two more points.

Senior Madison Lariscy drilled a pull-up jumper with 56 ticks remaining and freshman Bailey Daniel hit two from the line with 46 seconds to play to conclude the scoring.

SCORING: Maddox 20, Day 13, Colwell 10, Nalascchi 7, Stroman 6, Lariscy 2, Busse 2, Daniel 2 REBOUNDS: Nalascchi



Juniors Layne Colwell and Kim Coyne getting after it on the defensive end vs Lakeview. Photo/Todd Forrest

8, La. Colwell 7, Stroman 6, Day 4, Maddox 4, Busse 3 ASSISTS: Day 6, Stroman 4, Maddox 2, Coyne 2 STEALS: Maddox 8, La. Colwell 5, Stroman 4, Day 2 BLOCKS: Nalascchi 3, Busse 2

the gritty Lady Panthers gathered themselves and began to chip away in the second quarter and went into the half facing a manageable 24-17 deficit.

The third frame saw Union rally and get within a point at 32-31 with 8 minutes to play. With the Lady Panthers leading 37-36 late in the fourth, Dawson hit a trey and got a stop on the defensive end. The game was officially out of Union's grasp with two free throws that made it 51-47.

SCORING: Nalascchi 10, La. Colwell 6, Day 5, Coyne 5, Stroman 5 REBOUNDS: Nalascchi 9, Day 4, Coyne 4, Stroman 3 ASSISTS: Maddox 6, Stroman 3 STEALS: Day 3, Nalascchi 3, La. Colwell 2, BLOCKS: Nalascchi 1

Union continued to challenge the best of the best when Hayesville, NC paid the Lady Panthers a visit on Saturday.

The 3-1 Lady Yellow Jackets return the core of its State Final Four and defending Battle of the States championship squad. They are led by Towns County transfer Stephanie Patton who averages 22 points-per-game and four-year starter Amanda Thompson who averages a double-double with 14.4 PPG and 10 rebounds-per-game. Unfortunately for Hayesville, this game was being played at The Pit, and The Pit doesn't care what kind of accolades you bring with you when you lace up your sneakers against Union County.

The first half was played almost dead even with the Lady Panthers leading 21-19 at halftime,

but Union stretched its lead to 35-27 after three before going on to win 49-39.

Union's defense clamped down on an explosive Lady Yellow Jacket offense that scored 67, 65, and 57 points respectively, in its three wins.

Not only did Hayesville's point production dip, the Lady Panthers held them to a 12-for-46 shooting performance (30 percent) and 4-for-16 from beyond the arc (25 percent). Union finished 8-for-24 (33 percent) from long distance.

Patton scored a game-high 17 — five points below her average, on 6-for-19 shooting. Meanwhile, Thompson was held to 5 points on 2-for-9 shooting. Maddox led Union, who improves to 4-3, with 16 points, going 3-for-7 from the field and 9-for-11 at the line.

The Lady Panthers will be back in action on Friday when they host Towns County (2-5), looking for six-in-a-row over the Lady Indians. Region 8-AA action opens on Saturday when Oglethorpe County pays a visit. The Lady Patriots are being coached by former Union County assistant boys coach, and 1995 graduate, Michael Townson. Oglethorpe is currently 5-3 with wins that include Lanier, Athens Academy, and Jackson County.

SCORING: Maddox 16, Nalascchi 13, Coyne 6, Day 5, La. Colwell 3, Stroman 3, Lariscy 2, Daniel 1 REBOUNDS: Nalascchi 7, La. Colwell 7, Day 4, Maddox 4, Stroman 3 ASSISTS: Maddox 4, Stroman 4, Day 2 STEALS: Coyne 2, Day 2 BLOCKS: Nalascchi 3, Coyne 1

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Panthers respond to Lakeview loss with wins over Dawson, Hayesville

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With both teams sporting a 3-1 record, Lakeview and Head Coach Mike Cottrell were able to escape Blairsville with a 68-58 victory playing Cottrell's up-tempo style of basketball that brought him success at White County and Gainesville High School.

Union County and Head Coach Casey Jones were able to put the loss behind them and travel to Dawson County and secure the 62-57 victory in one of the toughest gyms to play at in northeast Georgia.

Saturday, Hayesville, NC and Head Coach Todd Cottrell (Mike's brother) came to Blairsville with one of the best Yellow Jacket squads in school history.

But as was the case in the Lady Panthers' game, The Pit proved to be the equalizer as Union (5-2) outscored the Yellow Jackets 17-5 in the fourth that blew open a 40-40 game after the third frame.

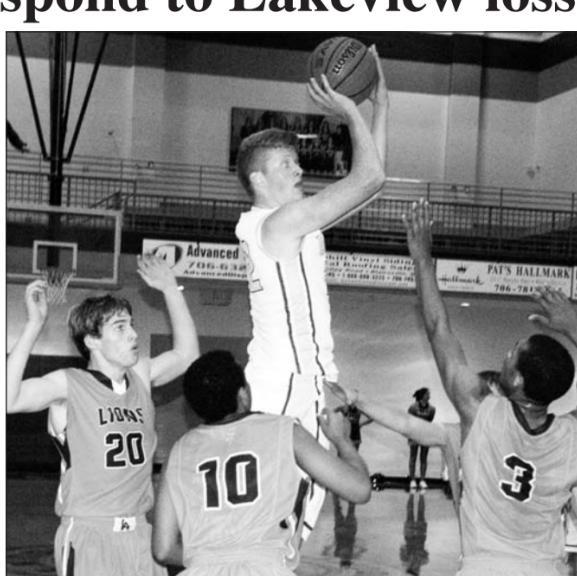
This week, Union will go for their 35th straight as they host Towns on Friday before opening Region 8-AA action on Saturday with Oglethorpe County at 3 p.m.

Panthers 58 Lakeview 68

The contest opened with a 6-0 run from the Lions as they went on to lead all 32 minutes of action. Despite 15 first half points from Hunter Hughes, the Panthers trailed 19-16 after one and 40-34 at halftime.

Lakeview scored three quick buckets to open the game but Hughes, who scored 9 points in the opening frame — cut the Lions lead to 6-5 after a trey and two free throws from the senior guard early in the first quarter.

Jacob Rogers went to work inside for two and kept Union within a point at the 4:05 mark. One minute, and two Lion baskets later, Hughes drove into the paint and converted an acrobatic lay up that was followed by a free throw



Chase Shook rises above the defense for a jumper. Photo/Todd Forrest

by Kyle Hamby. Trailing 16-10, Lance Rich scored on an offensive rebound but Lakeview connected from beyond the arc for a 19-10 lead.

The Panthers quickly regained momentum when Chase Shook received a pass on the baseline and drove for the two-handed slam — Union County's first dunk since Michael Ross in early 2008.

Moments later, Lake Arnick dished off to Hughes for a lay up, bringing the Panthers within three at 19-16 to close the first quarter with six unanswered points.

A Lakeview three stretched the lead to 22-16 in the first minute of the second frame but Rogers quickly countered with a baseline jumper off an assist from Hughes. However, another Lions trey put the visitors on top at 25-18 with 6:45 left before halftime.

Seconds later, Hughes was fouled and hit 2-of-2 at the line but a Lakeview basket pushed their advantage to 27-20. Ralston Drake scored in the paint but the Lions nailed their third trey in the first 2:08 of the quarter for a 30-22 lead.

Arnick knocked down a

15-footer and Lakeview answered with 1-of-2 at the charity stripe.

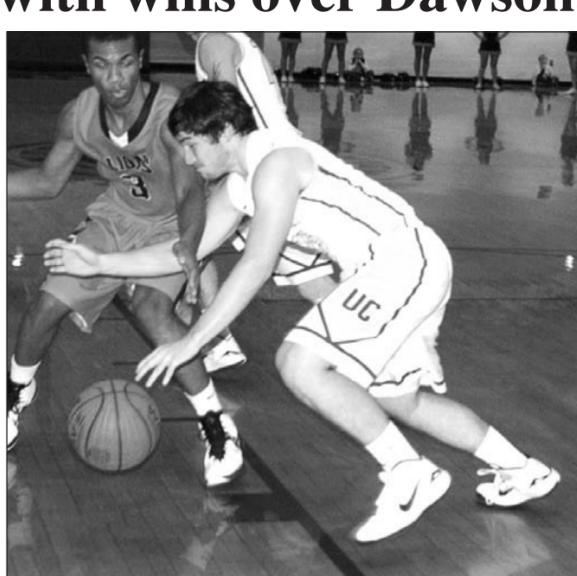
Facing a 31-24 deficit at the 4:52 mark of the half, the Panthers used a 6-0 run to get within a point — the closest that Union would get for the remainder of the game.

Rogers scored on a putback, Hamby nailed a pull-up jumper, and Hughes went coast-to-coast to cut the Lakeview lead to 31-30 with 3:13 left. Lakeview Head Coach Todd Cottrell called a timeout to settle his team, and it worked. His team closed the half by outscoring Union 9-4.

Sophomore Lawson Baenninger turned a steal into a lay up to bring the Panthers within two at 34-32, and Hughes took advantage of another Lakeview turnover to make it 38-34, but the Lions scored with 23 seconds left in the half for a 40-34 score at the break.

The Lions extended their lead to 57-44 entering the fourth quarter as Union was limited to 10 points during the third.

A pair of free throws 13 seconds into the period and a pair of baskets at 6:18 and 5:42 put Lakeview on top at 46-34. Drake went inside to get Union a basket but the Panthers were unable to get



Senior guard Lake Arnick battles for a loose ball. Photo/Todd Forrest

a stop on the defensive end. Down by 12, Tyler Odom was perfect at the line and that was followed by a short jumper from Rogers to make it an 8-point game with 3:55 left in the third.

The Lions would once again extend the lead with a deuce at 3:42 and a trey at 2:58, for a 53-40 score. Odom kept the Lakeview lead from getting out of hand with a pair of baskets to get Union within single digits but a Lions free throw and trey extended their advantage back to 13 after three.

Hughes, who was shutout in the third quarter, instantly went on the attack to open the fourth with a 16-foot jumper and a deep 3-pointer to get the Panthers within eight at 57-49 just 92 seconds into the period.

Lakeview extended its lead to 10 and then took advantage of a Union miscue which resulted in a wide open lay up for a 61-49 lead with 5:00 left. Hughes would connect on another trey, then go 1-for-2 at the line on Union's next possession, and that was followed by a Shook putback to make it a 63-55 game with 3:34 to play.

But once again, the Panthers defense took another stand-

ing siesta and gave up a wide-open, uncontested layup. Odom scored Union's final three points of the game with a basket at the 1:57 mark and a free throw in the final seconds.

The Panthers have lost two straight to the Lions, dating back to November of 2007. Prior to that, the Panthers owned Lakeview with 11 straight wins dating back to the late-90s when both teams belonged to Region 8-A. When Union moved up to AA during the 2000-01 season, the teams didn't play until the 2006 Battle of the States Christmas Tourney where Union drilled the Lions, 93-67 in the opening round. The Panthers proceeded to claim the championship at the 2006 B.O.T.S.

SCORING: Hughes 24, Odom 9, Rogers 8, Drake 4, Shook 4, Hamby 3, Arnick 2, Rich 2, Baenninger 2

Panthers 62
Dawson County 57

Dawsonville — Union County knocked off Dawson for the second time in a row last week becoming the first Panthers squad to win back-to-back games over

the Tigers since 2003.

Kyle Hamby and Baenninger led the Panthers with 11 points each as Union held off a late Dawson surge to prevail at the Ford Phillips Center in Dawsonville.

Odom scored 7 points in the fourth quarter on 3-for-4 shooting from the line. Baenninger also connected on 3-for-4 at the charity stripe in the fourth quarter.

Hughes went 2-for-2 at the line — scoring four of his nine points during the final frame.

The Panthers built a double-digit lead in the second and third quarters with Hamby scoring all of his team-high 11 in the second and third. Baenninger posted eight of his 11 points in those two quarters.

SCORING: Hamby 11, Baenninger 11, Hughes 9, Odom 8, Shook 8, Drake 7, Arnick 4, Rogers 2, Brown 2

Panthers 57
Hayesville, NC 45

The Yellow Jackets entered on a three-game win streak where they were outscoring opponents 80-37 on average.

From the opening tip, another battle ensued in front of a packed house at The Pit. The game was tied 20-20 after one, 28-28 at half, and 40-40 after three.

At the end of the third, things became heated with elbows flying and some pushing and shoving.

After a double-technical Union went on a rampage outscoring the Jackets 17-5 over the final 8 minutes.

Odom chipped in 7 of his team-high 21 points in the fourth, while Hughes went 4-of-4 from the line in the final quarter. Arnick nailed a trey, Hamby was 2-of-2 at the line, and Shook hit a free throw to round out the fourth quarter and finished with a career-high 10 points.

The rematch in Hayesville is scheduled for Jan. 24th

SCORING: Odom 21, Hughes 14, Shook 10, Hamby 5, Arnick 3, Rogers 2, Drake 2.