

Sports

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Panthers ride four-game win streak into weekend's Battle of the States

With a 7-2 mark, Union looks to break its own record with fourth BOTS Championship

By Todd Forrest
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Union County (7-2, 1-0) took care of business in its final week of the season before the Christmas Holidays and the 21st Annual Battle of the States Christmas Tournament that tips off on Friday.

Last weekend, the Panthers stretched their winning streak to four games after hosting rival Towns, then opening Region 8-AA play with Oglethorpe County on Saturday.

If you asked Santa for all the high school basketball games you can handle, then you've got your wish as all 16 teams participating in the BOTS will be in action on Friday.

Union County will make its 16th appearance in the Battle of the States, where the Panthers have won a record, three BOTS Championships.

The last title came in 2010 when Union went into the tournament at 7-0 and came out 10-0. That season was also Coach David Tucker's first year at the helm of the boys squad.

**Panthers 70
Towns County 54**

Union withstood two furious Towns County runs in the first and third quarters before using a 14-0 run of its own to put the Indians away for the 35th straight time.

Hunter Hughes scored 8 points in the first quarter and Tyler Odom scored 9 of his 21 points in the second quarter, but both took a backseat to sophomore Lawson Baenninger, who ignited the Panthers offense with four 3-pointers after Towns had taken an early 12-2 lead.

Union fell behind 6-0 until a Ralston Drake jump-hook got his team on the board. The Indians rattled off another six unanswered before Baenninger's onslaught.

At the 4:36 mark of the first, Towns County senior guard Dallas Manus was fouled beyond the arc and hit 3-of-3 at the line to put Union in a 12-2 hole.

On the ensuing possession, Baenninger connected on a trey from the corner. Then 47 seconds later, he nailed another three from the wing, and 23 seconds after trey number two, Baenninger made it 3-for-3, and with their 12-2 advantage trimmed to 12-11, the Indians



Juniors Chase Shook (22) and Andrew Brown (25), and senior Hunter Hughes get in position to grab the Indians' missed shot. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

called timeout.

Out of the break, Towns drew a foul on an offensive rebound and hit 2-of-2 at the line.

Trailing 16-11, Hughes connected from downtown but the Indians scored on a putback, making it 18-14.

Hughes responded with another trey that he followed up with a steal and layup for Union's first lead of the game at 19-18 with 1:45 left in the period.

In the quarter's final 40 seconds, junior Chase Shook added a basket in the paint and Baenninger polished off the quarter with his fourth trey to give Union a 24-18 advantage.

An NBA-range trey from Hughes opened the second quarter on a high note for Panthers.

On the heels of a Towns free throw, Odom knocked down a jumper and Union was looking at its largest lead, 29-19.

But that's when foul trouble began to plague the Panthers. With just under 6 minutes left in the half, the Indians converted an old fashion 3-point play on Hughes' third foul.

Towns County continued to make its living at the charity stripe, nailing 4-of-5 from the line to get within three at 29-26.

After the Indians made it a one-possession game, Kyle Hamby decided that was close enough.

Union's senior guard

drove baseline, double clutched in midair and banked in the deuce to end Towns' run and kickstart his team's 9-0 run.

With a 31-26 lead, Odom turned a steal into a layup, Shook hit 1-of-2 from the line, and following an Indians travelling violation, Lake Arnick scored inside off an Andrew Brown assist.

Hamby capped off the run on the defensive end when he turned a steal into an Odom reverse layup and a 38-26 lead.

A Towns jumper ended the run but Lance Rich responded with a 16-footer from the top of the key. Odom ended the half by turning a loose ball under the basket into two points and then hitting 1-for-2 at the line in the final seconds of the half.

Leading 43-32 at the break, Towns struck first by converting an offensive board into two but Odom got the points back when he scored off a perfectly executed inbound play between he and Shook.

The Panthers' big man was paid back for his dish to Odom with a jump hook in the paint that gave Union a 47-36 advantage.

History would repeat itself as foul trouble came back to bite the Panthers in the third quarter. Drake and Shook joined Hughes when each picked up their third foul early in the second half.

Drake's third foul resulted in two Indian free throws and one free throw came on Shook's

third foul.

Clinging to a 47-39 lead, the Panthers suffered from another case of bad luck when Hamby recorded another steal, but he slipped, and Towns turned the miscue into a trey.

With just over four minutes to play in the third, the Indians used a long rebound off a Union miss to get a layup at the other end. And just like that, it was a one-possession game again at 47-44.

The Panthers finally put an end to their two minute-plus scoring drought with a pair of free throws from Odom.

The five-point cushion lasted only 10 seconds as Towns' Manus connected on another trey to get the Indians within two at 49-47 at the 4:21 mark.

With 3:41 left in the third, Odom put the brakes on the Indians' furious rally with a three to stretch Union's lead to 52-47, and spark the 14-0 run.

The Panthers continued to restore order with an offensive board and a trey from Arnick. On top at 55-47, Hamby connected on off-balance jumper to increase the Union lead back to double-digits entering the fourth quarter.

The final frame opened with a baseline jumper by Shook, a putback from Odom, and a jumper by Drake for a 63-47 Panther lead.

A 2-for-2 trip to the line from Shook and a Drake layup



Lance Rich, Matthew Rich, defend as Tyler Odom blocks a shot. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

off a feed from Hughes made it a 67-50 game. Odom scored Union's next three points at the line to extend the lead to 20 at 70-50.

SCORING: Odom 21, Baenninger 12, Hughes 11, Shook 9, Drake 6, Arnick 5, Hamby 4, L. Rich 2

**Panthers 65
Oglethorpe County 58**

The Panthers held on after letting a 40-33 halftime advantage turn into a 52-52 tie entering the fourth quarter.

Odom scored eight of his game high 22 points in the final frame as Union outscored the Patriots 13-6 over the final 8 minutes.

During the fourth, Hughes chipped in 3 points, while Arnick and Brown each scored 2 points.

Union scored 22 points in the first quarter with 6 each from Odom and Hughes, Arnick, Hamby, and Lance Rich scored 2 points each.

Shook scored 4 points in the quarter on his way to a career high 12 points for the game.

In the second the Panthers continued to score at will with 7 points from Hughes, 6 points from Odom, a trey from Baenninger, and two Hamby free throws.

The third quarter saw the Patriots defense begin to clamp down while their offense kicked it up a notch. The visitors outscored Union 19-12 in the period to tie

things up at 52-52.

Shook helped keep the Patriots at bay with 8 points in the third. Odom added a pair of baskets to round out the quarter.

SCORING: Odom 22, Hughes 16, Shook 12, Hamby 4, Arnick 4, Baenninger 3, Brown 2, Rich 2

The Panthers will be back in action on Friday in the opening round of Towns County's Battle of the States Christmas Tournament.

The Panthers are 29-16 in the tournament over 16 appearances dating back to 1998.

Union's first title came in 2000, with the second one in 2006. The Panthers won their record-setting third title in 2010.

But since then, the Panthers haven't come close to winning it all, losing 2-of-3 games in the 2011 and 2013 tournaments. Union placed third in 2012 but suffered their first loss of the season on day two of the tournament.

This time around the Panthers are one of the favorites among the local schools, but the Alabama teams are always a wild card.

And Union opens the tournament with one of those wild cards, Hokes Bluff Ala.

Hokes Bluff is currently 6-3 with a 65-60 win over Piedmont, Ala, another BOTS tournament squad.

The Lady Panthers tip at 4 p.m. on Friday with the guys to follow at 5:30 p.m.

Lady Panthers, winners of three straight seek first BOTS title

By Todd Forrest
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Head Coach David Tucker and the Union County Lady Panthers (6-3, 1-0) are on a roll.

After shooting the lights out vs Hayesville and Lakeview, the Lady Panthers continued to fire away during wins over Towns County and Oglethorpe County.

Now, the Lady Panthers turn their focus to the Battle of the States Christmas Tournament where they are looking for their first championship after finishing second in two of the last three years.

Union will open with Hokes Bluff Ala, who knocked off the Lady Panthers on the third day of last year's tournament in a game where Hokes Bluff Head Coach Jason Shields was given a technical foul after his 12-year old daughter was harassing the officials.

Hokes Bluff went on to grind out a 42-36 victory.

The Lady Panthers will open the 2014 Battle of the States at 4 p.m. with the Panthers to follow at 5:30 p.m.

**Lady Panthers 76
Towns County 23**

With Lady Indians Head Coach Jim Melton serving a two-game suspension after an ejection a week earlier, Union County hosted his Towns County squad on Friday and went on to win by a score of 76-23 - hitting 11 treys in the first three quarters.

Union's 76 points is the most scored by a Lady Panthers basketball team since the 2004 Battle of the States when Union knocked off Towns County 76-72 in overtime.

It's uncertain when the last time the Lady Panthers scored 76-plus points in regula-



Kaitlyn Day, Brooke Maddox, Lisa Nalaschi, and Jillian Lawn battle for the rebound vs Towns County. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

tion is, but it hasn't happened in 10 years, or since the 2004-05 season.

Last Friday night, Union County made quick work of the Lady Indians with a 15-0 run, right out of the gates.

The Lady Panthers stretched their lead to 18 after the first quarter at 26-8. Union continued to pour it on in the second quarter and took a commanding 47-13 advantage into the break.

Senior Kaitlyn Day led the Lady Panthers with 17 points and hit two treys in the first quarter and two more early in the third before the starters were given the rest of the night off.

Sophomore Holly Stroman connected on two treys in the first quarter to go with 12 first half points. She would finish with a career high 14 points on the night.

Senior Lisa Nalaschi put up 7 points in the first quarter,

senior Brooke Maddox scored 2 points in the first and 9 points in the second quarter.

The third quarter opened with two treys from Day, one from way beyond the arc, and a Maddox steal that turned into a Stroman layup that made it a 55-13 game.

At the next whistle, Coach Tucker sat the starters and turned things over to the second and third string.

Junior Stephanie Busse and sophomore Ashley Fair each scored on a putback, stretching the lead to 59-13.

Fair then added another basket off a steal at midcourt. Junior Kim Coyne hit a pull up jumper from 16-feet - making it 63-13 with 3:06 left in the second quarter.

Following a Towns basket, freshman Bailey Daniel hit a trey, then added another one later in the quarter, coupled with a layup by freshman Jillian Lawn, to give the Lady

Panthers a 71-19 lead entering the fourth quarter.

Busse added two more baskets in the fourth quarter and junior Anna Danek hit a free throw.

SCORING: Day 17, Stroman 14, Maddox 11, Nalaschi 7, Daniel 7, Busse 6, Colwell 5, Fair 4, Coyne 2, Lawn 2, Danek 1

**Lady Panthers 63
Oglethorpe County 41**

It wasn't a pleasant homecoming for Coach Michael Townson, a Union County graduate, former Union County assistant coach, and current Oglethorpe County head girls basketball coach.

"If I'm going to get beat by Union, I at least want it to be to a good Union team," Townson said after the game, "and Union County has got one heck of a team"

The Lady Panthers hit 13



Senior Lisa Nalaschi blocks a Lady Indians shot attempt. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

treys in the win over the Lady Patriots and cruised to a 63-41 victory.

Union jumped out to an 18-6 lead after a quarter and never looked back. The shooting of Day sparked the Panthers early outburst as the senior hit four treys in the first quarter, en route to a six-trey performance. Union stretched the lead to 39-18 at the half and 62-27 after three.

The Lady Patriots would close with a 14-1 run for a 63-41 final.

SCORING: Maddox 24, Day 18, La. Colwell 9, Nal-

aschi 8

The Lady Panthers will be back in action on Friday in the rematch with Hokes Bluff at 4 p.m..

Union could also see another familiar face in the second round with Hayesville, NC on the other side of the bracket. The Lady Yellow Jackets will need to get by White County if they want to repeat as the tournament champions. With two of the last three champs, Dawson County and Gordon Lee not participating, the ladies bracket is wide open this year.

Both UCMS Swim Teams finish fourth at Winter Invitational Meet



UCMS Swim Team wrapped up its season at the Winter Invitational In the 50-meter freestyle, Grace Weldon finished first place, Kaiya Wilkes and Gavin Thompson were each third. In the 200-meter freestyle relay Weldon, Wilkes, Kayla Bowman, and Macy Davis were third. In the 50-meter backstroke, Jaden Olmsted was third. Brennan Wilkes was second in the 100-meter freestyle for the high school team.

Planes flying at Union County Elementary



Elementary students participate in the final flights for paper airplanes

On Tuesday, November 24th the Union County Elementary students hosted the final flights for Paper Airplanes. All students made paper airplanes in STEM class the previous week and had a preliminary flight to find the one in each class that flew the farthest.

Winners from each home-room are: Third Grade - Coleson Derreberry, Min Han, Micheal Morris, Payton Wilford, Michael McCraw, Caroline DeLoach, Justin Potts, Chad Lynn, and Damien O'Neal. The winning plane was made and flown by Chad Lynn.

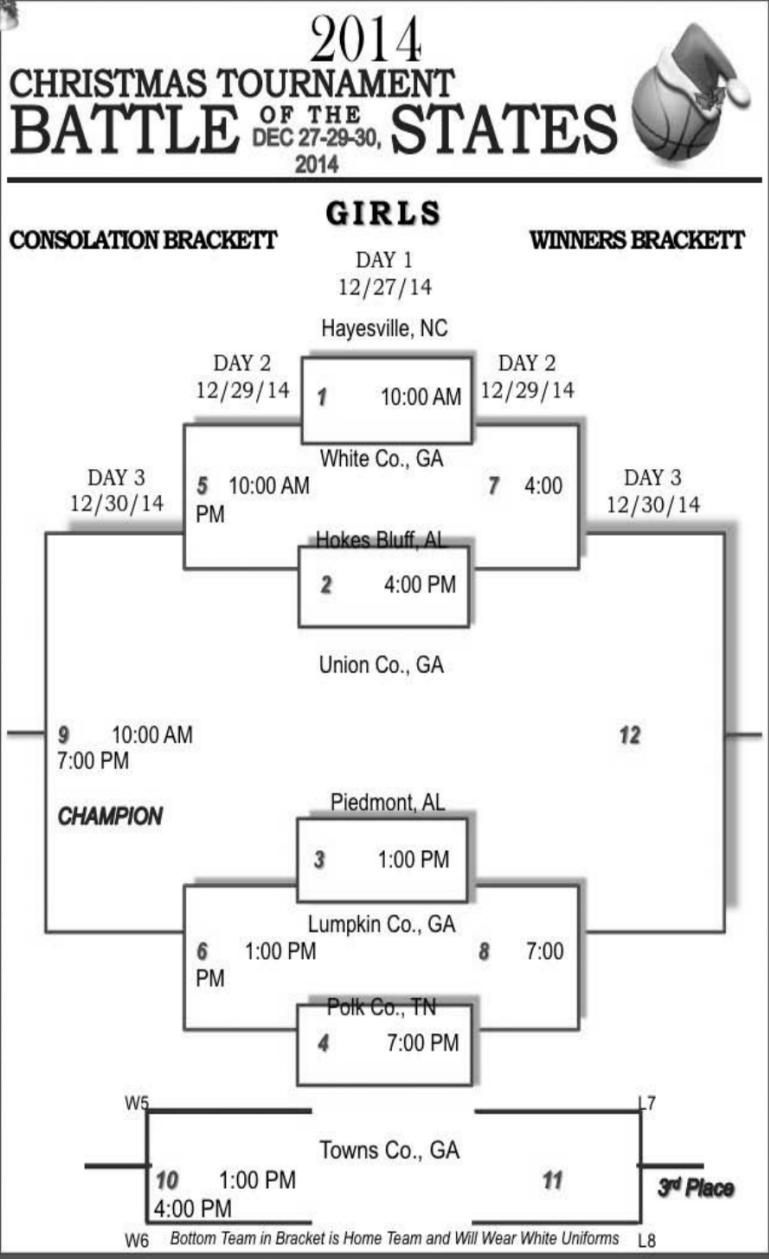
Fourth Grade - Emily Taylor, Cayleb Rogers, Isaiah Ortiz, Isaac Jurries, Nate Silva, Landon Matheson, Madison Hughes, Zane Kabani, and Jacob Williams. The winning plane was made and flown by Zane Kabani.

Fifth Grade - Erik Nation, Traci Wright, Carson Walker, Christopher Grader, Bailey Brown, Austin Abercrombie, Kendall Conley and Riley Lowry. The winning plane was made and flown by Bailey Brown.



(L-R): back - Debra Collins, Asst. Principal; Lt. Col. Dawn Brookshire; Patricia Cook, Principal; front - Zane Kabani - 4th Grade; Chad Lynn - 3rd Grade; and Bailey Brown - 5th Grade

On hand to start our races and award the winners was Lt. Colonel Dawn Brookshire. Lt. Col. Brookshire retired from 24 years of service in the US Air Force flying Blackhawk helicopters. She talked to the students about the Air Force and how she decided to enter the service. She encouraged students to work hard and shoot for their goals. The Elementary School is excited about building our first Science Olympiad team. This event was designed to drum up enthusiasm for our team. Competition at the Olympiad includes various events that require students to construct towers, bridges, and rockets. They are given materials and a small team of two or three are directed to assemble and test their creations.



Clogging classes at Folk School

The John C. Campbell Folk School Cloggers will offer classes for beginners of any age starting Monday, January 12. Classes are in Keith House at the Folk School in Brasstown, NC, from 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. Previous experience is not necessary. Hard soled shoes are preferable.

Please call Dianne Jackson at 828-837-8090 for more information.

Hayesville Resolution Run 5K

The Yellow Jacket Club of Hayesville High School is sponsoring the HHS Resolution Run 5K on New Year's Day. Registration begins at 10 a.m. at the High School Track and the race starts at 11 a.m. The cost is \$25 and includes a free t-shirt for all those who are pre-registered. Medals will be given to the Top 3 in all age groups as well as the Overall male and female runners. All proceeds from the race go to benefit the athletes of Hayesville High School with equipment requests and annual scholarships.

Registration forms available at Clay County Chamber of Commerce, HHS Office and online at active.com. Please call 706-781-7388 with any questions.

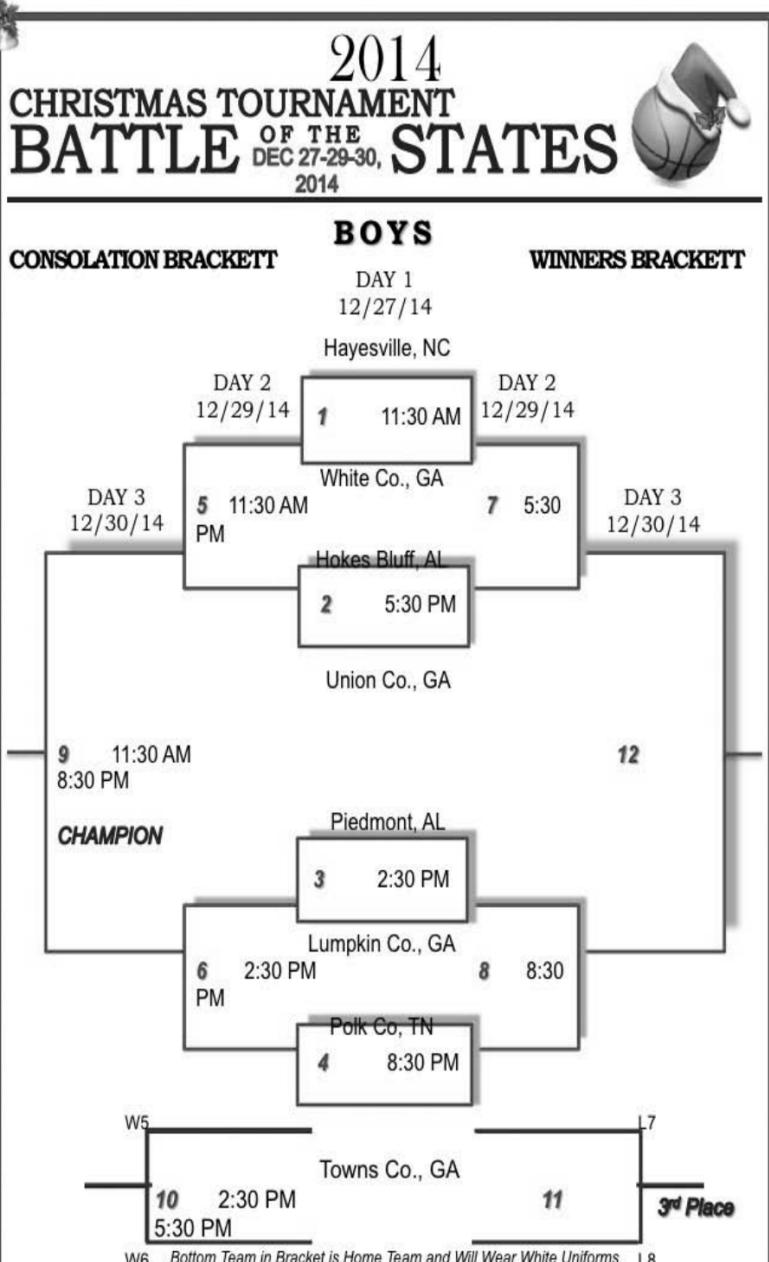


Upward Indoor Soccer 2015

On-line registration is now open for Upward Indoor Soccer for boys and girls in grades Kindergarten through 8th Grade at www.hopb.org or at www.fumcunioncounty.org. Form and registration fees may also be dropped off, Monday through Friday, at the House of Prayer Family Life Center or First United Methodist Church's business office between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The registration price to participate is \$60, through January 13th, and an additional \$10 will be applied thereafter. Payment plans are available, if needed. Convenient once per week practices commence the week of January 26, 2015, while games will be held on Saturdays between February 14 and March 28, 2015.

Registrants should attend the evaluation that will be held on Tuesday, January 13th on a drop-in basis between the hours of 5 and 7 p.m. at the House of Prayer Family Life Center located behind the sanctuary. For more information regarding registration, contact either church office at HOP (706) 745-5925 or FUMC (706) 745-2073. Information regarding Upward Sports can be found online at www.upward.org.



Union County High School / Middle School 2014-15 wrestling schedule

- Dec. 3rd Wed @ Riverside w/ Shiloh & Dawson
 - Dec. 9th Tues @ Fannin County
 - Dec. 13th Saturday @ Rabun Gap w/
 - Dec. 19th Friday Union Duals w/ East Hall, Franklin, Rabun, etc
 - Dec. 22nd - Jan. 1st Christmas Break
 - Dec. 30th @ Sequoyah Tournament
 - Jan. 9th-10th Area Duals @ MONTICELLO
 - Jan. 14th Wed. @ Home w/ Rabun Gap middle and high
 - Jan. 16th-17th Dual State @ Macon Cetriplex
 - Jan. 21st Wed. @ Pickens w/ Cherokee
 - Jan. 23rd Friday @ Oglethorpe
 - Jan. 30th-31st Traditional Area @ SOCIAL CIRCLE
 - Feb. 6th-7th Sectionals @ GAC or GREATER ATLANTACHRISTIAN
 - Feb. 12th-14th STATE @ MACON CENTRIPLEX
- Middle School
- Dec. 9th @ Fannin
 - Dec. 20th @ Fannin MS AWL Tradional Tournament
 - Jan. 14th @ HOME with Rabun Gap and Fannin