

Sports

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Lady Panthers overwhelm Fannin; offense struggles at Dawson

Union County "grows up" during 61-38 loss to top-ranked Greater Atlanta Christian

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The Lady Panthers dropped to 12-6 overall and 4-3 in 7-AAA following a pair of region losses to No. 1 Greater Atlanta Christian and at Dawson County.

Union County's lone win came Friday night via a 45-29 home victory over Fannin County - their eighth victory in the last 11 meetings with the Lady Rebels.

Meanwhile, the Lady Panthers remain in the mix for No. 2 seed at next month's 7-AAA tournament but could also drop as low as sixth thanks to a congested region race.

GAC has separated themselves from the pack with a 6-0 record with East Hall (4-2), Union County, North Hall (3-3), and Dawson County (2-3) all within one game in the loss column.

Sixth place Lumpkin County (2-5), who already owns a win over Dawson, sits 1.5 games back of the fourth-and-final playoff spot while Fannin is bringing up the rear at 1-6.

"The good thing is, we got that win at East Hall," coach Corey Garrett said. "Now everyone has to come here, except for GAC. East Hall has to come here, North Hall's got to come here and Dawson has to come here."

"Everything is right there in front of us. I believe we're tied with North Hall. I know they have the tiebreaker over us right now but hopefully, we can get (the win) when they come up here."

The Lady Panthers' only region game this week is a Friday trip to GAC, however, the Lady Spartans and Dawson County are scheduled to meet on Tuesday and Thursday of this week after winter weather postponed the first meeting.

In another pivotal region clash, East Hall visits cross-county rival North Hall on Tuesday, looking to put a stranglehold on second place.

As for Union County, they will travel to Pickens on Tuesday to face the 14-3 Lady Dragons, who are coming off a 46-40 home loss to Gilmer on Friday. The Lady Panthers defeated Pickens, 57-53 on Dec. 21, igniting a six-game winning streak by the Lady Dragons that was thwarted by the rival Lady Bobcats.

On Saturday, Union County will host Andrews, NC in a makeup game from December. The Lady Panthers already own a 48-29 victory at Andrews back on Jan. 6.

Union County 45, Fannin 29 - The Lady Panthers never looked back following an 11-0 run that opened up a 37-21 lead with 1:39 left in the third quarter.

Kait McCarter hit 10-of-12 from the floor for a career-high 25 points to go with 13 boards and two steals. The sophomore post netted 11 points in the second quarter to help Union respond to an 11-2 Fannin County run that awarded the



Sophomore Kait McCarter (30) scores two of her career-high 25 points during the second half vs Fannin County on Friday night. Photo/Todd Forrest

Lady Rebels their first-and-only lead of the game at 14-13.

A trey by sophomore Adelin Hill spotted the Lady Panthers a 9-1 early advantage. Then a Bailey Daniel jumper made it 11-3 before Fannin closed the first with four points in 22 seconds to trim the margin to 11-7.

A McCarter put-back made it 13-9 early in the second until five-unanswered put the Lady Rebels on top 14-13. Union County trailed for a total of 20 seconds before another offensive board by McCarter led to a basket. A minute later, she made it an 18-14 game with a 3-point play; then on the ensuing possession, Hill put the finishing touches on a 7-0 spurt with a put-back of her own, extending the lead to 20-14.

Two free throws and a trey allowed Fannin to pull within a point at the 1:22 mark of the second but Brooke Dockrey went inside for two then a pair of buckets by McCarter, including a buzzer-beating layup, gave the Lady Panthers a bit of breathing room at 26-19 heading into the break.

The first basket of the second half belonged to the Lady Rebels but Union's defense clamped down and didn't allow another field goal until under a minute to play in the third.

In the meantime, the Lady Panthers took advantage of the scoring drought with an 11-0 run that extended their lead to 16. Daniel went 2-for-2 at the line and McCarter scored consecutive baskets in the paint to give Union its first double-digit lead of the game at 32-21. But it wouldn't end there as Daniel converted an and-one and Brooke Dockrey used a dribble-drive for two more.

A Fannin free throw at the 1:24 mark and moments later, a put-back kept them alive through three quarters.

With her team ahead 37-24 entering the fourth, Daniel hit 1-of-2 at the stripe, McCarter also split a pair of free throws before sinking two with 5:46 to play - extending the Union lead

to 41-24.

McCarter would put the Lady Rebels away for good with a free throw at the 2:49 mark followed by a stick-back 58 seconds later for a 44-27 advantage.

Daniel finished with 10 points, three rebounds, and two assists. Hill added 5 points, five boards, three assists and two blocks.

Brooke Dockrey scored 4 points to go with a team-high four assists; Mary Wischmeyer had 1 point, three rebounds, and two steals; Adeline Dockrey finished with two boards and two steals despite battling foul trouble most of the night.

Inside the numbers - Union County hit 17-of-40 (43-percent) from the floor while connecting on just 10-of-22 (45-percent) from the line.

The Lady Panthers attempted just two shots from long distance - connecting once. Union finished with 35 rebounds, 14 coming on the offensive glass that led to 14-second-chance points. The Lady Panthers turned it over 20 times resulting in 14 Fannin points. Meanwhile, Union converted 20 Fannin turnovers into 12 points.

The Lady Rebels hauled 16 offensive rebounds (31 overall) but they only mustered 5-second-chance points. Fannin shot just 24-percent (11-for-45) from the floor and 36-percent (5-for-14) at the line. The Lady Rebels struggled from beyond the arc, hitting just 2-of-18 (11-percent) from downtown.

Both Fannin treys came from junior guard Maleah Stepp, who led the visitors with 9 points.

Dawson 52, Union 42 DAWSONVILLE - The Lady Panthers shot a season-low 37-percent (7-for-19) at the foul line while hitting just 35-percent (17-for-49) from the floor - their lowest field goal percentage since the loss to Murphy, NC during the Battle of the States.

Following a back-and-forth first quarter, Dawson took a 27-23 lead into the break but Union County's offensive woes eventually caught up with them

late in the third quarter as the Lady Tigers opened up a 13-point lead.

Trailing 48-36 after three, the Lady Panthers would get no closer than a 10-point deficit while shooting just 3-of-10 in the fourth quarter.

Hill finished with a game-high 16 points while grabbing a career-high 14 rebounds and knocking down her team's only 3-point shot. McCarter also turned in a double-double performance with 12 points and 10 boards.

The duo of Hill and McCarter combined for 12-of-22 from the floor and 3-of-5 at the line. Unfortunately, the rest of the squad shot an anemic 19-percent (5-for-27) from the floor, 0-for-5 from 3-point range and 29-percent (4-for-14) at the line.

As for Dawson County, they didn't fare much better, shooting 37-percent (23-of-63) while making just 4-for-14 at the line and 4-for-22 from long distance.

The difference, however, was 24 Union County turnovers that led to 21 Lady Tiger points on the other end.

The Lady Panthers only lead of the game came right out of the gates when an Adeline Dockrey put-back and a pull-up jumper by Hill gave Union a 4-0 advantage.

A Daniel steal-and-score made it 6-2 then she drove inside and found McCarter for a layup and an 8-7 lead. With 5 seconds to play in the first, McCarter was fouled on a put-back attempt, resulting in a 1-for-2 trip to the line and an 11-9 Dawson lead after a quarter.

McCarter opened the second with a 3-point play to give the Lady Panthers their final lead of the game at 12-11. McCarter trimmed the deficit to 15-14 with a lay-in at the 5:23 mark, but that would be her final basket until 5:40 to play in the fourth quarter.

Hill tied the score at 15-15 with a 1-for-2 trip to the charity stripe, then Brooke Dockrey drove inside for two - tying the

game at 17-17.

After six-unanswered from Dawson, Daniel hit 1-of-2 at the line to pull within five. Later, a short jumper from Wischmeyer made it a 23-20 game. Following a Lady Tiger basket, Wischmeyer split a pair from the line but Dawson answered with another deuce, but with time running out, Hill knocked down a jumper from close range to pull within 27-23 at the intermission.

Hill opened the third by drilling a corner-trey - making it a one-point game. The Lady Tigers answered with a 3-ball of their own, followed by a deuce to stretch the margin to six at 32-26.

Hill continued to keep her team in the game with a long 2-point jumper then Adeline Dockrey knocked down a 15-footer before Dawson stretched the lead to 39-30 at the 4:30 mark of the quarter.

The next five Union points belonged to Hill -- two baskets and a free throw -- but the Lady Tigers still led 43-35. Down 13 with time running out in the period, Daniel was hacked while driving the lane, resulting in a 1-for-2 trip to the line and a 48-36 Dawson County lead.

A McCarter stick-back kept Union within a dozen then a 12-footer by Hill made it 50-40 but that's as close as they'd get. McCarter kept the Lady Panthers within 10 on a put-back with 2:28 remaining but neither team would score again.

Daniel finished with team-highs in assists (6) and steals (3) while pulling down three rebounds. Adeline Dockrey had 4 points, three rebounds, and a blocked shot; Wischmeyer added 3 points and five boards; Brooke Dockrey ended up with 3 points, three rebounds, and two dimes.

GAC 61, Union County 38 - The Lady Panthers were unable to keep up with top-ranked GAC on Saturday, falling behind 18-6 after one and 27-12 at the break.

Union County managed to stay within 20 for most of the second half despite the Lady

Spartans applying full-court pressure with the starting-five until the final horn sounded.

Trailing 45-26 early in the fourth, baskets by Daniel and Hill made it a 15-point game with 5:38 to play. Later in the period, a Daniel steal-and-score and a Hill jumper pulled Union within 18 at 52-34 with just over two minutes to play.

The Lady Spartans scored five-unanswered for a 57-34 advantage at the 1:25 mark. Union scored on a pair of put-backs by Daniel and McCarter during the final minute while GAC answered with two fast-break baskets, including one at the buzzer to pad the stats.

"We got off to a slow start but I like the way we battled all the way to the end," Garrett said. "We grew up a lot in that second half."

Hill finished with her second double-double in three games scoring 10 points with 11 rebounds. Since the calendar flipped to 2018, Hill has churned out three double-doubles after only one during November-December.

Brooke Dockrey netted 10 points and 4 boards - her first double-digit scoring performance. McCarter scored 8 points with six rebounds, ending her streak of five-straight games scoring in double-digits.

She is, however, leading the team in scoring and rebounding for the month of January at 15.2 points per game and 8.5 rebounds per game.

Those numbers are up from the 8.8 points and 8.2 rebounds that she averaged over the first half of the year.

Daniel, the team's overall leading scorer at 12.7 ppg over the year, finished with 6 points, seven boards, and two steals. Adeline Dockrey had 2 points, five rebounds, and two dimes. Jordan Rogers had 2 points and two boards, while Wischmeyer pulled down six rebounds.

GAC was led by senior Taylor Sutton's 19 points; senior Caria Reynolds added 15 while junior Kennedy Williams had 10. Of the 10 Lady Spartan players listed in the official book, only six saw action at Union County.

Inside the numbers - Union shot 32-percent from the floor - matching its season-low (at North Hall, vs Murphy). The Lady Panthers pulled down 52 rebounds, 20 on the offensive end, resulting in 16 second-chance points.

Union County finished 0-for-9 from 3-point range and 0-for-7 at the line.

GAC converted 25 Union turnovers into 21 points. The Lady Spartans grabbed 26 offensive boards, leading to 15 second-chance points.

GAC also struggled from the floor, shooting 32-percent (24-of-75) but were a solid 33-percent (5-for-15) from long distance while connecting on 8-of-15 (53-percent) at the line.

Friday's rematch at GAC will tip at 7 p.m. while the Tuesday contest at Pickens and Saturday's home meeting with Andrews, NC both begin at 6 p.m.



Sophomore Adelin Hill at Dawson County on Tuesday. Hill has already recorded three double-doubles in the month of January, two have come in the past week. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Bailey battles for a loose ball late in the game vs No. 1 Greater Atlanta Christian. Photo/Todd Forrest