

Sports

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No shortage of offense in Union-Habersham Central scrimmage

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Football fans received their first glimpse of the 2018 Union County Panthers when Class AAAAA's Habersham Central made its way north to Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on Friday for a preseason scrimmage game.

No score was kept but each offense finished with five touchdowns apiece. The starters played into the third quarter before giving way to the backups midway through the period. The junior varsity took over to start the fourth quarter and would run the show for the final 12 minutes.

"I saw a lot of good things tonight and I also saw a lot of areas where we need to make adjustments," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said to the team after the game. "For about a quarter-and-a-half, I thought we played with emotion and excitement. After that, we started to get a little winded, or whatever you want to call it, but if we want to be the best team that we can be, we've got to be able to play four quarters."

The first half ended with three touchdowns for both offenses but Union County went 70 yards on the opening drive of the third quarter, closing the book on the Panthers.

Panther quarterback Pierson Allison completed 16-of-20 passes for 178 yards and three scores. He also rushed nine times for 32 yards in just over two quarters of action.

The Raiders would answer Union's touchdowns with a pair of scores at the 8:26 and 3:36 mark of the third. The final score of the night belonged to the Panthers JV with 59 seconds to play.

Sophomore Jonah Daniel rushed for a team-high 92 yards on 8 fourth quarter carries but the final touchdown belonged to fellow sophomore Payton Ivester, who rushed three times for 12 yards and a score.

The first touchdown of the night went to Habersham Central when receiver Donatarius Bailey was able to get behind the Panther secondary and quarterback Tre Luttrell hit him in stride for a 35-yard score down the far sideline.

"(Cornerback) Alec (Scott) kind of stopped his feet on the first touchdown," Brian Allison said. "He was in good shape, it was just a little technique error."

Union County would answer with junior Pierson Allison leading an 11-play, 70-yard scoring drive, capped off by a 9-yard connection from Allison to senior Kanon Hemphill.

The drive almost stalled in Panther territory, however, with the offense facing a 3rd-and-10, but senior Chad Buzzard took a screen pass 23 yards for a first down inside Raider territory.

Following consecutive quarterback scrambles for 12 and 8 yards and a first down run by Buzzard, Union was in business at the Habersham 14-yard line.

A short pass to Buzzard picked up five but a no-gain on second down brought up 3rd-and-5 from the nine. Facing another important third down situation, Pierson Allison would roll right and find Hemphill at the pylon for six.



Senior Chad Buzzard (24) and junior Kyle Morlock (84) celebrate Buzzard's second quarter touchdown run on Friday. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Brian Smith point-after made the unofficial score 7-7 with 5:48 left in the first.

On the ensuing Raider drive, the Union defense was on its heels once again as Habersham quickly moved inside the Panther 30.

With a first down at the 29, senior linebacker Jackson Colwell pulled Luttrell to the turf for a 9-yard loss. The sack put the Raiders in an obvious passing situation and senior safety Chayton Schafer was ready to pounce.

Looking deep over the middle, Luttrell's pass had a little too much air under it and Schafer, who was patrolling the middle of the field, jumped in front of the receiver for the first turnover of the night.

Schafer eventually brought the pick back out to midfield before he was brought down - setting the offense up on the Habersham side of the 50.

Seven plays and 46 yards later, the Panthers were back in the endzone. This time it was Buzzard's turn to find pay-dirt,

mark of the second.

The Panthers' ensuing drive resulted in another three-and-out, allowing the Raiders to take over at their own 31 with 5:33 until halftime.

An offside penalty on Union was followed by a run of 30 yards by Arian Curry and a 24-yard pass completion.

With a 1st-and-goal at the 10, Habersham used three running plays to punch it in the endzone - the third coming from one-yard out.

"Around the 6-minute mark (of the second quarter) we kind of fizzled a little bit and I think it was pretty obvious," Brian Allison said. "I think we came out excited and really gung-ho and we exerted a lot of energy over the first quarter-and-a-half."

"I don't know if we're out-of-shape, but it looks like we're out-of-shape and I'm not happy with that, at all."

The Panthers would set up shop at the 30 with 3:31 left on the clock - plenty of time for a Howard McCombs-coached



Safety Chayton Schafer picks off a Raider pass. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior defensive leaders Chayton Schafer (2) and Jackson Colwell (32) lead the Panthers out of the locker room on Friday. Photo/Todd Forrest

taking the handoff from 2 yards out and bulldozing his way, up-the-middle, behind senior center Coleson Daniel and sophomore guard Aaron Helton.

Both offenses would exchange punts following two quick three-and-outs but Habersham eventually evened the score with a 2-yard quarterback keeper by Luttrell at the 6:32

offense.

Although, Union was almost victimized by another three-and-out when Buzzard was smothered on 3rd-and-1.

Facing a fourth down from the 39, Pierson Allison faked to Buzzard and rolled left. Expecting the Panther QB to use his legs for the first down, the defense bit, leaving junior wide out Cayden Rich open for a 15-yard completion.

Three plays later, junior Kyle Morlock converted a 3rd-and-5 with a 17-yard reception. Later, facing third-and-inches, the Panthers called a reverse and Morlock, who tallied a team-high 77 yards on seven catches, moved the chains once again as the clock ticked under one minute.

Two plays later, Schafer caught a second-and-long screen pass and weaved his way through traffic for an 11-yard score - unofficially tying the game at 21-21 going into halftime.

Pierson Allison came out of the break on fire. During the opening minute of the third he completed 5-of-5 passes for 60 yards, including a 20-yard scoring toss dropped into the outstretched arms of Morlock in the back of the endzone.

Morlock finished the drive with a pair of grabs for 34 yards and a TD, Hemphill

caught two passes for 16 yards, Rich had a 10-yard catch, and Buzzard rushed once for 10 yards.

Habersham responded with a score of its own, capping off a nine-play drive with a 3-yard run at the 8:26 mark of the third.

On the ensuing drive, Hemphill replaced Pierson Allison behind center and had the offense on the move with completions to Morlock and Rich, a pair of runs by junior Sloan Sutton, and a 15-yard facemask penalty on the Raiders.

Following a defensive holding on Habersham, Union County found themselves with a first down at the Raider 29. History would repeat itself, however, as the Panthers suffered the same fate as the Raiders did earlier in the contest on Schafer's interception.

A first down sack dropped Hemphill for an 11-yard loss, putting the Panthers in a passing situation. On 2nd-and-21 from the 40, Hemphill tried to hit Morlock on a quick slant but the pass ricocheted off the junior receiver's fingertips and into the hands of a Habersham defensive back.

The Raiders returned the interception all the way down to the Union 14.

The Panther defense stood tall and moved the Raid-

chestate two lengthy drives.

Joining Helcher in the backfield was Daniel, who gained nine yards on his first carry. A toss to freshman Carson Walker went for six yards, then Daniel broke loose for gains of 20 and 14 yards.

Inside the redzone, Ivester rushed for two yards, McCombs reeled in a seven-yard pass, and Daniel moved the sticks with two yards on 3rd-and-1.

The drive would stall at the 5-yard line as the Panthers were pushed back to the 8. On 4th-and-goal, Smith would attempt a 25-yard field goal through the rain, but his kick sailed wide left.

Union's final drive came on the heels of a Habersham fumble at the Panther 28-yard line with 2:22 remaining.

Three straight gives to Daniel went for 12, 7, and 24 yards. Another shovel pass to Walker went for 28 yards before he was pushed out inside the 5.

On 1st-and-goal, Ivester cashed in from the 4-yard line with 59 seconds to play. McCombs split the uprights on the point-after to conclude the scoring for the night.

"I think the (JV) moved the ball really well and we were able to get a lot of guys some playing time so I'm very pleased with that," Brian Allison said.

UP NEXT: While a few local teams open the season Friday, Union County is off and will host its annual Meet the Team event at 5:30 p.m. -- weather permitting.

The season gets underway on Friday, Aug. 24 when the Panthers host former Region 7-AAA foe East Hall at 7:30 p.m. Next week's *North Georgia News Sports* section will feature a preview of the East Hall Vikings, as well as other football-related news and notes.

For those in the mood for some high school football action, after stopping by and meeting the players on Friday, there are a handful of local games.

Town County will travel to its cross-lake rival Hayesville, NC. Fannin County also opens with a rivalry game when they visit Gilmer. Habersham Central also gets underway Friday when they host Dawson County. In Region 8-AA, Banks County hosts Jackson County, while Rabun County meets Bremen on Saturday at Paulson Stadium in Statesboro.

Unofficial stats: (PASSING) Allison 16-20, 178 yards, 3 TD; Kanon Hemphill 4-6, 30 yds, INT; Helcher 3-4, 38 yds. Habersham totals 18-29, 212 yds, 3 TDs, INT.

(RUSHING) Daniel 8 carries, 92 yds; Buzzard 10 car, 24 yds, TD; Allison 9 car, 32 yds; Sutton 4 car, 22 yds; Ivester 3 car, 12 yds, TD. Habersham totals 39 car, 233 yards, 2 TDs.

(RECEIVING) Morlock 7 receptions, 77 yds, TD; Rich 6 rec, 61 yds; Kanon Hemphill 4 rec, 33 yds, TD; Walker 2 rec, 34 yds; McCombs 2 rec, 12 yds; Schafer 1 rec, 10 yds.



Junior QB Pierson Allison posted 310 total yards. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sophomore running back Jonah Daniel finished with a team-high 92 yards - all coming in the fourth quarter. Photo/Todd Forrest