

Sports

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Kendrick sets UCHS freshman passing records in 49-6 win

By Todd Forrest
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Union County (1-2, 1-0) cracked the win column Friday night during a 49-6 rout of Murray County courtesy of freshman Kamden Kendrick's record-breaking performance.

The Panthers quarterback set a pair of UCHS freshman marks with 222 yards passing and 4 touchdowns through the air as his team scored 35 unanswered to pull away from a 14-6 first-half edge.

"[Kendrick's] confidence continues to grow," Union County head coach Michael Perry said. "Being a freshman, he wasn't expecting to be in this spot, but he keeps getting better and better. It's a testament to his work ethic and his character. He's very coachable and just a great kid. He doesn't show a lot of emotion, and for a quarterback, that comes in handy."

Senior wide receiver Maddox Young hauled in three scores while piling up 131 yards on 6 receptions.

After the game, Young talked about his team's first win.

"It feels awesome just coming out here and competing and winning," he said. "Hopefully we can keep riding the W-train and win out the rest of the season."

On the ground, senior Connor Schuknecht churned out career-bests of 95 yards and 2 TDs, leading a Panthers' rushing attack that averaged 6.1 yards per carry.

As for Kendrick, a pair of first-quarter scoring strikes spotted Union a 14-0 lead, the first coming on a 9-yard throw over the middle to Young, followed by a quick 2-yard sideline pass to junior Tyler Parker.

A penalty after Parker's



Freshman quarterback Kamden Kendrick breaks loose in the Murray County secondary during the second half of Union County's 49-6 victory over Murray County. Photo/Todd Forrest

touchdown and a decent kick return granted Murray's offense a short field, and consequently, the Indians capitalized, going 35 yards on 10 plays to narrow the gap to 14-6 early in the second.

On the ensuing drive, Union County answered with a steady dose of sophomore running back Bentley Rich, who carried three consecutive times for 11, 7 and 6 yards, setting up a 38-yard completion to freshman tight end Jax Dillinger. On the very next play, Schuknecht blasted his way into the endzone from 6 yards out.

"Connor had a good game and I'm really proud of Bentley, he's getting better and better," Perry said.

A three-and-out by the Panthers defense awarded Kendrick possession at the 37 after the punt, and on the sixth play of the series, Young split two defenders down the middle and hauled in a 28-yard scoring strike to mount a 28-6 halftime advantage.

"Maddox is a playmaker for us in various roles," Perry said. "He does a good job for us in all phases."

Young added, "I just want to do whatever I can to help the team win. Whatever it takes to win, I'm up for the challenge."

Murray began the third by driving inside the Union 30 but an errant pass on fourth and 16 handed the keys back to a red-hot offense that quickly extended the margin to 35-6.

Runs by Schuknecht and Kendrick moved Union to midfield, where Young delivered a 48-yard house call on a third-and-9 screen pass -- his third touchdown catch of the night.

"I'm really proud of how (sophomore tackles) Easton Shumaker and Jaxon Totherow played," Perry said. "They're so athletic and their ability to get out and block is the reason we're so good at screens. And (senior guard) Beau Webster, he did a really good job getting out there blocking on screens. It was a really good game by the offensive line."

The defense forced a three-and-out after senior linebacker Kaden Combs swallowed up the Indians' running back for a 6-yard loss on first down, but the Panthers' next series ended in a rare punt.

Combs struck again on Murray's ensuing possession, diving in front of the tight end to pick off a pass at Union's 36. From there, Kendrick faced pressure on first down, and with a defender draped on his back, somehow flipped a pass to Young, who used his legs to pick up 12.

As the fourth quarter got underway, the Panthers went back to Schuknecht and Rich on six straight runs, with Schuknecht putting Union into the endzone via a 2-yard carry.

Later in the fourth, freshman Micah Wallace found paydirt on his lone carry, scoring from 6 yards out and punctuating the 49-6 win.

Rich ended his night with 50 yards on 6 carries,

Young had one rush for 14 yards and freshman Daniel Wrench added a yard on 2 carries.

Dillinger had one catch for 38 yards, Schuknecht caught 3 passes for 21 yards and freshman Mikey Davis had 2 grabs for 18 yards. Freshman Haze Burnette and sophomore Rob Thompson each recorded a 6-yard reception. Parker finished with a 2-yard touchdown catch.

Kendrick ended 13 of 17 through the air during his second straight interception-free outing. Kendrick's 222 yards passing broke his own freshman record from his 202-yard outing vs. Fannin. Kendrick's four TDs topped the UCHS freshman mark previously held by Shaun Conley (1982).

Sophomore kicker Grant Smith finished perfect on his PAT tries.

"We're really proud of Grant," Perry said. "He has worked really hard and is out there before every practice kicking extra points and field goals."

Wallace led the defense with 9 stops and 3 TFL, Combs had 8 tackles, Ethan Lester had seven, Darin Patterson recorded six, Alan Godinez finished with 5 tackles and Brandon Lynch had 4 tackles and forced a fumble.

"Having Ethan and Darin was a huge boost to our defense," Perry said. "It was good to have them out there and they had a really good game."

Sophomore Gunnar Franklin and junior Daniel McPhee shared a sack.

Up next: Union County travels to Rockmart on Friday to face the Class AA State Runner-up. The Yellow Jackets ended Union's 2023 season with a 56-14 rout in the Sweet 16. Rockmart lost several key players from last season's 12-3 squad but returned more than enough talent to enter 2024 as the odds-on favorite in Region 7-AA.

The Yellow Jackets are 1-2 on the year but opened region play last week with a 23-20 overtime victory at Ringgold.

"Most of [Rockmart's] team graduated from last year, but they have their one big playmaker (No. 2) back," Perry said. "No. 1 and No. 24 are also really good football



Senior WR Maddox Young turned in his second 100-yard receiving performance in as many games. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior RB Connor Schuknecht hurdles a defender to set up an early Union County score. Photo/Todd Forrest



Kaden Combs (54) and the Union County defense jar the ball loose from an Indians ball carrier. Photo/Todd Forrest



Freshman tight end Jax Dillinger picks up some yards-after-catch during the second half vs. Murray County. Photo/Todd Forrest

players and its going to take multiple players to tackle 24."

With a trip to one of the state's top programs on the horizon, Young expects an intense week of practice.

"We need to be laser-

focused and take everything serious," he said. "We can't be joking around because Rockmart is a really good team so we need to stay focused on them."

Softball: Anthros' 1-hitter lifts Union above .500 in Region 7-AA

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Union County (7-8) improved to 3-2 in Region 7-AA behind a one-hit shutout from sophomore Izzy Anthros, who carried a perfect game into the fifth inning and a no-hitter into the sixth during a 3-0 home win over Murray County.

Now the Lady Panthers head into a busy week with three region games in four days, beginning with Monday's trip to North Cobb Christian. Union County hosts Coahulla Creek on Tuesday and Rockmart on Thursday. Currently, Union County and Coahulla Creek are tied for third in the loss column in Region 7-AA and are one game back of second-place, one-loss Rockmart.

Lady Panthers 3, Murray County 0 - Anthros struck out 12 during a 7-inning, 75-pitch masterpiece vs. the Indians on Thursday, Sept. 5.

Senior Mikala Souther went 2 for 2 with an RBI to lead the Union bats. Junior Delaney Moses drove in a run and stole a base during a 1-for-3 performance.

The Lady Panthers put up three in the third, which was plenty for Anthros, who sparked the Union scoring with a leadoff single in the frame. Freshman Addison Whit-



Sophomore Izzy Anthros in the circle during her 1-hit shutout of Murray County. Photo/Todd Forrest

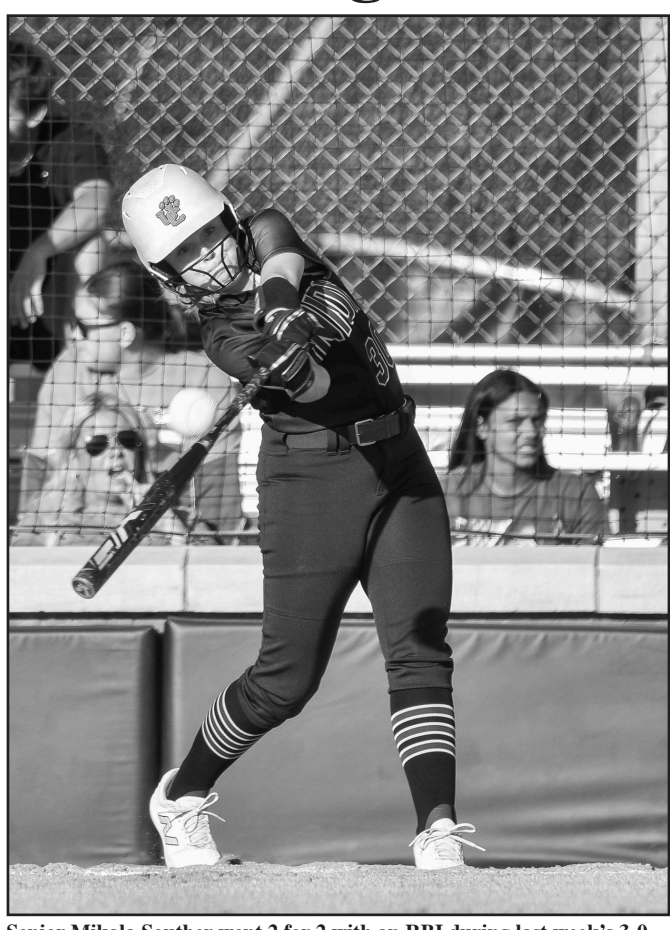
ener followed with a base hit, and senior Sloane Dyer was hit by a pitch to load the bags. A one-out single by Moses scored two runs -- the second coming around via an error on the throw home. Souther wrapped up the

scoring with a sacrifice fly that scored Lily Helton.

Anthros didn't allow a base runner until a hit batter with one out in the fifth but proceeded to slam the door with consecutive strikeouts.

A bloop single to begin the sixth ended her no-hit bid, but sophomore catcher Jules Dyer cut down the runner on an attempted steal of second.

Anthros went 1 for 2 with a pair of walks at the dish;



Senior Mikala Souther went 2 for 2 with an RBI during last week's 3-0 victory over Murray County. Photo/Todd Forrest

Whitener finished 1 for 4 with a run; Sloane Dyer went 1 for 1 with a run and a walk.

Helton reached on a fielder's choice and scored; Jaslyn Roberts and Jules Dyer each finished 1 for 3.

Up next: Union County and Coahulla Creek get underway at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 10. The Lady Panthers-Rockmart rematch begins at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 12.

Volleyball: Panthers open region play Tuesday vs. Rockmart, Sonoraville

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Union County volleyball enters Tuesday's Region 7-AA opener with a 12-7 mark following three wins in five matches last week.

The Panthers host Rockmart (16-8) and Sonoraville (10-13) on Tuesday to begin region play. Union County and Rockmart meet at 5 p.m., followed by Rockmart vs. Sonoraville at 6 p.m. and Union vs. Sonoraville at 7 p.m.

Panthers 2, Dawson County 0 (25-14, 25-22) - Union County avenged an earlier 2-0 loss in Dawsonville by taking down the Tigers in straight sets on Thursday, Sept. 5 in Blairsville.

Senior Charlei Robinson recorded 6 kills, 8 digs, 2 assists and an ace in the win. Senior Lily Brookshire notched 5 kills, 9 digs and an ace; senior Katelyn Brown had 4 aces, 3 kills, 9 digs and 8 assists.

Junior Reese Jones returned to action, logging a team-high 10 assists along with 4 digs and 3 kills. Sophomore Payton Murphy had 11 digs and 2 aces; sophomore Sofia Foster added 2 blocks.

Panthers 2, Commerce 0 (25-13, 25-18) - In last Thursday's nightcap, Union County easily handled Commerce behind 5 kills apiece from Brookshire and senior Mallory Rouse.



Senior Lily Brookshire during a recent home match. Photo/Todd Forrest

Foster contributed 4 kills and 2 blocks; Jones had 4 aces, 2 kills, 2 digs and a team-leading 11 assists.

Brown's 7 digs led the Panthers to go with 2 kills, 2 aces and 6 assists. Robinson had 2 aces, a kill and a block; junior Mady Adams had a kill and 3 digs; sophomore Emmy Kight added a kill and a dig.

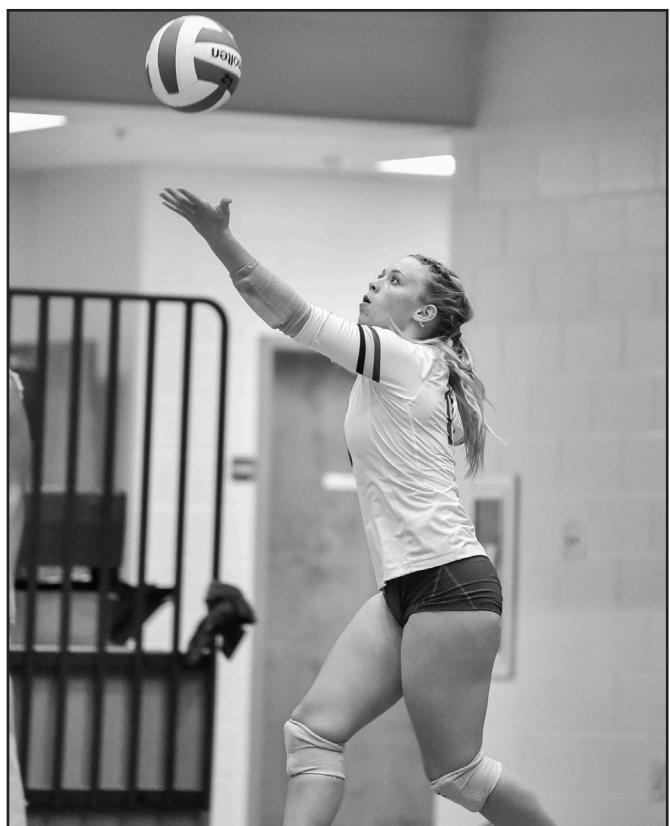
Freshman Samantha Combs picked up 6 digs and freshman Emry Sosensky chipped in an ace and 4 digs.

Junior Jordan Beavers had one assist, Brookshire finished with 6 digs, and Rouse had one dig.

Panthers 2, Gilmer 0 (25-22, 25-14) - On Saturday, Union County traveled

to Chickamauga for Gordon Lee's Trojan Invitational, winning one of its three contests.

Robinson finished with 11 digs, 2 assists, an ace and a kill; Brookshire had 4 digs, a kill and an assist; Brown had 4 assists and an ace; Robinson finished with 4 digs, a kill and a block; Rouse had a kill and 2 digs; Sosensky chipped in



Senior Charlei Robinson serves during a Union County home match earlier this month. Photo/Todd Forrest

added 2 aces; Sosensky finished with 8 digs.

Panthers 0, Northwest Whitfield 2 (24-26, 11-25) - Foster led Union County with 3 kills and 2 blocks. Jones had 11 digs, 2 assists, an ace and a kill; Brookshire had 4 digs, a kill and an assist; Brown had 4 assists and an ace; Robinson finished with 4 digs, a kill and a block; Rouse had a kill and 2 digs; Sosensky chipped in

a kill and a dig; Combs and Murphy had 3 digs each.

Panthers 0, Gordon Lee 2 (14-25, 24-26) - No stats were available for Saturday's match vs. Gordon Lee.

Up next: After hosting Rockmart and Sonoraville on Tuesday, the Panthers welcome Andrews, North Carolina to Blairsville on Thursday, Sept. 12 at 5 p.m.

XC: Hunter places fifth; both UC teams log top-10 finishes at North Hall



Lola Hunter and Oliver Hillman were Union County top placers at North Hall. Photos/Todd Forrest

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Gainesville - Junior Lola Hunter placed fifth with a time of 20 minutes, 14 seconds at last week's North Hall race, pacing the Union ladies to a sixth place finish among 15 teams.

Union County ended the day with 205 points, six better than seventh-place Greater Atlanta Christian (211). North Hall (23), Buford (63), White County (90), Lumpkin County (122) and Walnut Grove (169) were the top five.

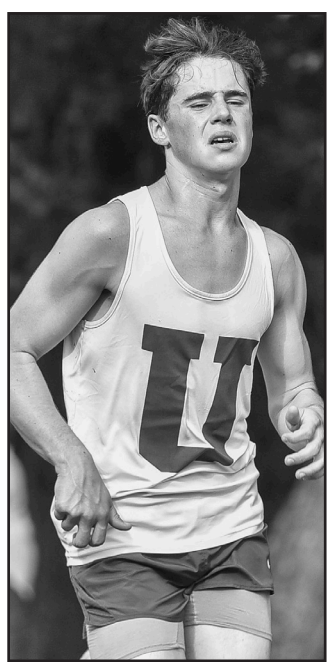
On the men's side, sophomore Oliver Hillman placed 29th at 18:59. Union was ninth out of 18 teams with 215 points. Johnson-Gainesville

placed 10th at 308. The Panthers fell in behind eighth-place White County (202) and seventh-place GAC (200).

The top-five were North Hall (50), Lumpkin County (61), Buford (64), East Forsyth (129) and Cherokee Bluff (183).

Behind Hillman for Union County was Andrew Nushtayev in 39th at 19:24; Noah James Payne in 40th at 19:28; Cole Brown in 57th at 20:08; Ander Faulkner in 64th at 20:23 and senior Logan Duckworth in 86th at 21:19.

In the girls' race, freshman Macy Payne placed 38th at 24:08; Kate Barrett was 60th at 25:36; Lydia Wagner was 66th at 25:48; Avery Husson was 69th at 26:05 and



senior Katie Payne came in 76th at 26:30.

Union County will attend the North Georgia XC Invitational in Oakwood on Saturday, Sept. 14.

Union County travels to Stephens County on Sept. 19 before rounding out the month with a trip to Dalton on Sept. 23.

At last month's Meek's Park race, Hillman placed second at 20:17 as Union County placed seven runners inside the top 10.

Hunter placed first with a time of 22:35 as three of the top-five girls' runners were Panthers.

Both Union County teams finished first in the three-team race ahead of second-place Gilmer and third-place Towns County.

MACA volleyball earns region win vs. PBA



Mountain Area Christian Academy hosted a region match Aug. 26 vs Philadelphia Baptist Academy. The fans witnessed two teams playing with a lot of passion and intensity.

The first set the Lions won 24-19. The second match, the Lions pulled out a close win, 25-23, but for the third set, Philadelphia fought back and played at a higher level to win 25-23.

At the beginning of the fourth match the Philadelphia girls pulled ahead, and they had the momentum, then suddenly, the Lions fought back harder, and it was tied. Both teams showed fantastic character and were executing outstanding plays. The crowd was very loud and responsive to seeing the intensity in the eyes of the players.

The final score of 25-23 brought MACA ahead for the win. The athletes celebrated their hard-fought win with great joy and excitement.

The starting lineup for 2024 is: 17-Soraya Wasit,

8-Sara Bittel, 4-Maggie Hooper, 15-Austin Beal, 99-Hannah Corley, 10-Shelby Roesch and 12-Mercy Lee.

Come out to watch the Lions and support our team.

Home games are as follows: Sept. 10 at 4 p.m. vs. Friendship Christian School.

Sept. 13 at 4 p.m. vs.

Trinity Classical School.

Sept. 16 at 5 p.m. vs.

Dogwood Christian Academy.

Sept. 19 at 4:30 p.m. vs.

Lighthouse Christian Academy.

Sept. 24 at 4 p.m. vs.

Sugar Hill Christian Academy.

Oct. 3 at 4:30 p.m. vs.

North Georgia Christian Academy.