

# Sports

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## Softball: Lady Panthers open State Tournament at Heard County

### Lady Panthers stay put in fourth place following losses to Monticello and Banks County

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**MONTICELLO** - After going the distance with Elbert County, the Union County Lady Panthers (15-13) made a quick exit from the Region 8-AA Tournament following losses to Monticello and Banks County during the semifinals.

Hosted by top-seeded Monticello, the No. 4 seed Panthers drew the home team in game one and fell behind 7-0 after two innings as the Hurricanes cruised to an 8-0 victory.

Union would draw Banks County in the second game of the double-elimination tournament and didn't fare much better in a 6-1 loss.

It wouldn't take the Lady Panthers long to learn where they would travel in the opening round of state as Heard County claimed the Region 5-AA title two days later.

After finishing the regular season 10-0 in region play, the Lady Braves ran the table during the 5-AA Tournament despite being forced to rally from a 7-0 deficit to Lamar County in the semifinals.

Union County Head Coach Stephen Mitchell became well-acquainted with Heard County during his time at Bowdon as the two schools shared a region until 2015-16.

"They were one of our



The Union County seniors will play in their third state tournament in four years. As freshmen they reached the Class AA Elite 8, two years ago they advanced to the Class AAA Sweet 16 and last year they missed the tournament for the first time since 2008. Photo/Todd Forrest

rivals at Bowdon," Mitchell said. "I don't think I ever beat them as a head coach but we tangled with them for four years while (Bowdon) was in AA.

"Coach (Matt) Hornsby is a good guy and it's nice to have someone you know to work with during this series."

Game one is currently scheduled for Wednesday at 5:55 p.m. with the second game to follow. Game three will be Thursday at 2 p.m. if necessary.

**Lady Panthers 1, Banks County 6** - The Leopards put Union away with two in the third, two in the fifth, and one in the sixth after grabbing an early 1-0

lead with two singles and a walk in the bottom half of the first.

Trailing 1-0 after two, Rebekah Kelley walked and Lexi Sisum singled to put two aboard with nobody out but both were left stranded.

Down 3-0 in the fourth, Union County tried to make some two-out noise when Miranda Lockaby and Caley Davis walked then Kelley singled to load the bases but Banks would escape with its 3-0 lead still intact.

Later in the game, Wischmeyer walked and Arnold singled with one out before a strikeout and ground out ended the fifth inning.

The Lady Panthers finally got on the board in the seventh when Maddie Sutton scored after reaching on an error.

Sophomore Trinity Queen went the distance for Union, striking out one and surrendering six hits, two walks and six runs.

**Lady Panthers 0, Monticello 8** - The Lady Canes needed just five innings to take down Union County in the first game of the Region 8-AA semifinal tournament.

Monticello used two runs in the first and five in the second to take control at 7-0.

The Lady Panthers missed an early opportunity to make it

a game when Lockaby walked and Davis singled but were left on base.

Back-to-back fly outs would end the Union County half of the third after Sisum walked to lead off the inning and Wischmeyer singled with one down.

Kelley singled and reached third in the fifth inning but the Lady Panthers were unable to push across the one run necessary to continue the game.

Junior Megan Bright got the start for Union and tossed four innings, giving up eight hits and three walks.

The Lady Panthers were

without senior slugger Bailey Rayfield who suffered an injury prior to the regular season finale. According to Coach Mitchell, her status is uncertain for the remainder of the season.

**Looking ahead** - Heard County enters with a 19-6 record after winning Region 5-AA's regular season and its postseason tournament.

According to Coach Mitchell, Heard County is a proud program that's hungry for success after uncharacteristically failing to reach the Elite 8 last year.

"They're a young team but they have a rich tradition," Mitchell said. "They won a state championship in 2013. They are well-coached, they're going to swing the bat very well and they have four pitchers that all throw in the mid-to-low 50s (MPH) and spot the ball very well. It's going to be a very tall task for us.

"I think our toughest challenge will be slowing their offense down. I've known (Heard's coaches) for a long time and they teach hitting very well. They are very disciplined at the plate and they're going to hit your mistakes."

"We've just got to go out and execute our game plan and Megan (Bright) and Trinity (Queen) have both done a pretty good job of that and improved weekly. They've bought in to what we're teaching and those two girls have had a good year."

## Football: Panthers looking for ninth straight win

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Union County and Banks County will meet for the 40th time on Friday as the Panthers look to tie the program record of nine consecutive wins set during 2001.

The current eight-game winning streak began late last year with victories over Fannin County and Lumpkin County then continued through six games in 2018. Eight-in-a-row matches the second longest streak in program history, set over two seasons in late-1974 and early-1975.

The Panthers' 39 previous meetings with Banks County are the fourth most by any Union County opponent. Only Rabun County (51 meetings), White County (42) and Lumpkin County (40) have met the Panthers more often than the Leopards.

Union County has won 21 of the 39 meetings and currently owns a two-game win streak in the series. Since 2006, however, the Leopards have won six-of-nine vs the Panthers.

Two years ago in Homer, Union County outlasted Banks 42-28. Last year, the Panthers scored the game's first 31 points, en route to a 31-6 victory in Blairsville.

The Leopards are currently 3-3 overall and coming off a brutal 68-7 loss to 5th ranked Rabun County, but at 2-1 in region play, they're still very much alive for a top-two seed and home field advantage in the first round of state.

"They had some bad luck early (against Rabun) and gave up an easy 28 points, which was too much to overcome," Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said.

The Leopards are under the direction of first-year head coach Jay Reid -- previously the defensive coordinator at West Hall after beginning his coaching career at Banks County in 2006.

Joining Reid is former North Hall offensive assistant Kerry Kidd, who is very familiar with the Panthers after the Trojans put up 87 points (55 last year) in two seasons vs the Union County defense.

Kidd takes the reigns as the Leopards offensive coordinator and has installed a Wing-T system

similar to North Hall.

Banks County graduated star running back Clayton Dykehouse but will feature a stable of solid rushers this season, led by Terrance Walker, Jacob Lehotsky and Sean Hall.

"Their running back from last year is graduated but they have another running back this year who I think is a really good player," Coach Allison said. "They have a good center and they're guards are really good. The quarterback does a nice job running that offense, and like I said earlier, the running back is very good."

Coming off a bye week, Union County had two weeks to prepare for the Banks County Wing-T offense. At the same time, Coach Allison was glad to have that extra week coming off the emotional victory at Elbert

County.

"We prepared for the Wing-T some over the summer," he said. "It's not an offense that you can practice against for three days and feel good about (facing it)."

"I also think we were ready for a break. We didn't get home until 2 a.m. on Saturday morning (after Elbert). Now I think we've had enough time to let that win sink in, and remember, it was only two years ago that Banks beat Elbert at the Granite Bowl so some of their kids know what that feels like."

"So I'm glad we had that extra week and think it worked out well for us with the timing of the bye week."

Kickoff with Banks County is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Friday at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

## Joe Mancuso breaks school record in first collegiate start



Former Union County standout quarterback Joe Mancuso got the start on Saturday in Richmond's 43-28 loss to Delaware. Mancuso, a redshirt-sophomore, tallied a school record 560 total yards with 489 yards and three touchdowns on 27-for-37 passing. He also ran 12 times for 71 yards and a score. Photo/Alexa Welch Elund - Richmond Times Dispatch

## UCHS Fishing team places third; qualifies for Nationals



Logan Anderson and Will Harkins during weigh-in following their third place finish out of 44 teams at Wheeler Lake in Alabama. With the performance, Union County has qualified for the National Championships. The duo reeled in five fish for a combined weight of 12 pounds, 1-ounce (12-1). Brooks, AL placed first at 13-12 and Cedar Bluff, AL came in second at 12-1. In fourth was Sylvania, AL at 8-15.



Union County Head Coach Brian Allison and senior center Coleson Daniel embrace following the Panthers' dramatic 29-28 victory at Elbert County last month. The win was Union County's eighth straight - tying the 1974-1975 teams for the second longest winning streak in program history. Photo/Todd Forrest