

# Sports

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## Wright's 536 yards isn't enough to keep Union's playoff streak alive

### North Hall rushes for 441 yards in 55-34 victory to clam final playoff spot in 7-AAA

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**Gainesville** - For the first time in five years, the Panthers will be at home during the state playoffs following a 55-34 loss in a must-win game at North Hall.

With three straight losses to open region play, the Panthers found themselves in a do-or-die predicament at the Brickyard on Friday night.

Cole Wright turned in a career-high 436 yards passing but it wasn't enough to counter a Trojan offense that had its way with the Panther defense. Despite losing its leading rusher, Jack Brown, less than a minute into the game, North Hall piled up a season-high 441 rushing yards on 8.3 yards per carry.

Wright also picked up 100 yards on the ground for a total of 536 yards - possibly a school record. But there was no doubt who his go-to receivers were as the duo of senior Austin Pattee (168 yards) and sophomore Sawyer Drake (132 yards) combined for 200 receiving yards.

"Rarely do we call a play to a particular receiver," coach Brian Allison said. "Our passing attack is a concept passing game. What the defense does is what determines where the ball is going."

Trailing 20-7 Wright and Pattee connected on a 9-yard touchdown pass on 3rd-and-7. On the next series, the receiver duo came up aces again, this time Drake cashed in a 60-yard catch-and-run touchdown.

Tied at 20-20 in the second quarter, a North Hall kick return touchdown was followed by consecutive Panther turnovers that led to 21-unanswered Trojan points.

When the fourth quarter got underway at the Brickyard, North Hall was in control 41-20 and were never threatened again.

With a playoff spot on the line for both teams, the Panthers came out flat and fell behind 20-7 early in the second. Union would roar back with 13-unanswered to even the score but on the ensuing



The Union County Panthers take the field at the North Hall Brickyard on Friday. Photo/Todd Forrest

kickoff, North Hall regained the momentum for good by housing a 97-yard kickoff return.

"That was a major turning point in the game after we came back to tie it up," Allison said. "That gave (North Hall) the momentum and we were never able to regain it."

Then a Panther fumble near midfield gave the ball back to the Trojans, who needed eight plays to open up a 34-20 lead.

On the final play of the half, Union elected to attempt a Hail Mary instead of a 50-yard Brian Smith field goal - Smith narrowly missed a 56-yarder a week earlier vs Dawson County. Wright's heave into the end zone was picked off and a 34-20 half-time deficit was as close as the visitors would get.

The Panthers took the second half kick, and once again, found themselves in another dilemma. With a 4th-and-goal from the 10, Union County went for six points instead of three but the screen pass to Kanon Hemphill came up a half-yard short and North Hall took over in the

shadow of its own goalposts.

From inside the one, the Trojans drove 99 yards on 12 plays in a possession that chewed more than 6 minutes off the clock, all but putting the game away with a 41-20 lead as the fourth quarter got underway.

Down 21, the Panthers refused to surrender and Chad Buzzard punched it in from a yard out with 10:50 to play. Unfortunately, the defense couldn't come up with a much-needed stop and North Hall answered with a 6-play, 80-yard drive that was capped off with a 29-yard touchdown run with 8:20 to play.

With the Panthers on the brink, Drake delivered once again. This time picking up 56 yards on a 3rd-and-11 reception, advancing Union inside the Trojan 30. Following a first down sack, senior Cole Dockrey took a flare out of the backfield for 12 yards. With a 3rd-and-6 from just outside the 20-yard line, North Hall all but clinched its postseason berth with another

end zone interception with 6:12 remaining.

From there the Trojans went 80 yards on five plays to blow things wide open, adding an exclamation point touchdown for a 55-27 lead at the 4:05 mark of the fourth.

Union tacked on a late score when Wright scrambled across the goal line from 10 yards out with 2:39 to play. The Panthers' onside kick was recovered by North Hall, who ran out the remaining 159 seconds.

The Trojans opened the game with an 11-play, 80-yard drive that included two fourth down conversions, the second coming on 4th-and-goal from the 1-yard line.

Union County tied it up at 7-7 with a 9-yard run from Wright, but North Hall answered with a 9-yard touchdown pass and a 43-yard scoring run for a 20-7 lead with 9:08 remaining in the half.

The Panthers would pull within six when Pattee went up high to snag Wright's pass in the end zone. The 9-yard touchdown

pass came on 3rd-and-7 after a Trojan offside penalty canceled out a Union false start on the previous play.

The Panther defense forced a quick three-and-out, then Wright and Drake hooked up on a 60-yard scoring strike to even things up at 20-20 after Smith's extra point was blocked.

The tie was short-lived as North Hall used a 97-yard kick return touchdown to take a 27-20 lead. Later, with Union looking to tie it up, Wright coughed up the football on a 3rd-and-1 carry, allowing the home team to take over just 45 yards from pay dirt.

Following a false start, North Hall was forced into a 3rd-and-9 but the Panther defense was unable to get off the field, allowing a 15-yard completion to move the chains. On the very next play, the Trojans powered their way into the end zone from a yard out to open up a 34-20 lead with 36 seconds remaining in the half.

Union advanced its way

into field goal but kept Smith on the sideline to attempt a desperation heave from the 33-yard line that was intercepted in the back of the end zone.

The short-handed Trojans racked up a season-high 441 rushing yards (8.3 yards per carry) while reeling off 10 runs of 10-plus yards and five runs of 26-plus. Over its four-game skid, the Panthers are allowing 53 points per game; the 212 points allowed dating back to GAC is most allowed over a four-game stretch in UCHS history.

The Panthers are off this week before hosting Fanning County for Senior Night on Oct. 27.

"We've had about 10 or 12 kids that have missed practice or games due to injuries," Allison said. "We missed Chayton (Schafer) and Kyle (Williams) at North Hall and we're just trying to get healthy before these last two games so we can finish the season as strong as we can."

"I still don't believe Cole (Wright) and RJ (Banton) are 100-percent so we just want to focus on getting healthy this week."

#### Game Notes:

\* While out of the playoffs, the senior class can still match last year's class as the winningest class in program history with 32 wins.

\*North Hall had three different players rush for season highs on Friday: Drew Faulkner 167 yards, Cutter Sanford 105, and Daniel Jackson 88.

\*Sawyer Drake's 7 receiving TDs this season is the second most by a UC sophomore after Blake Gowder's 10 TDs in 2007.

\* After holding Banks County's offense to season lows in multiple categories, the Panthers defense have allowed a season high and/or career high to each opponent since.

\* Union hasn't lost four straight region games by 20-plus points since 2006 when they lost nine games in-a-row after opening the season with a win at Towns County.

\*With one more rushing TD, Wright will match Kolt Owenby's career rushing TD total of 33 - the most by a UC quarterback in recent history.



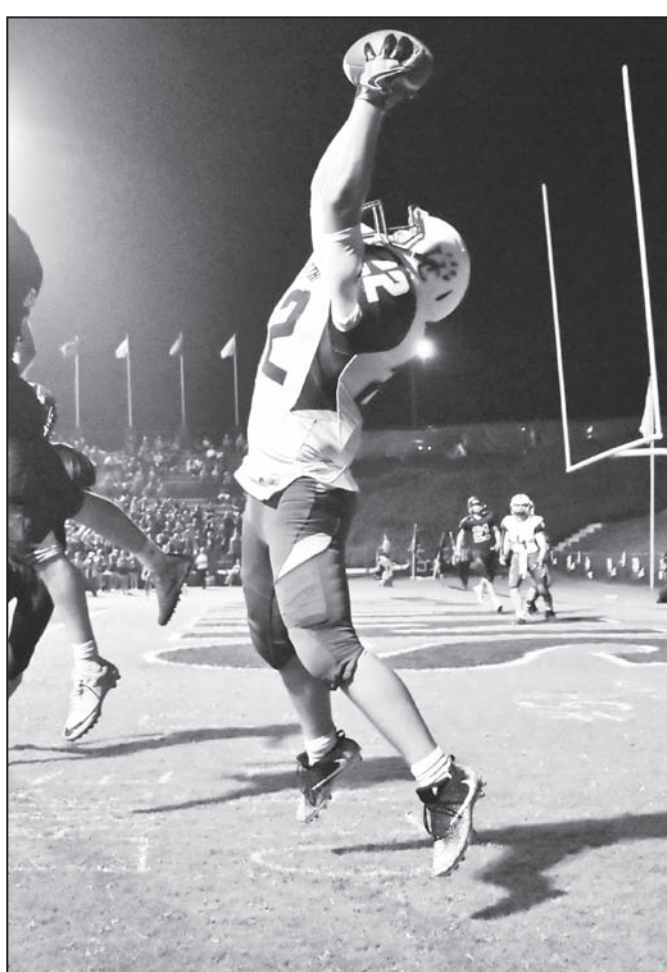
The Union County Cheer squad at North Hall. Photo/Todd Forrest



Cole Wright piled up 536 yards at North Hall. Photo/Todd Forrest

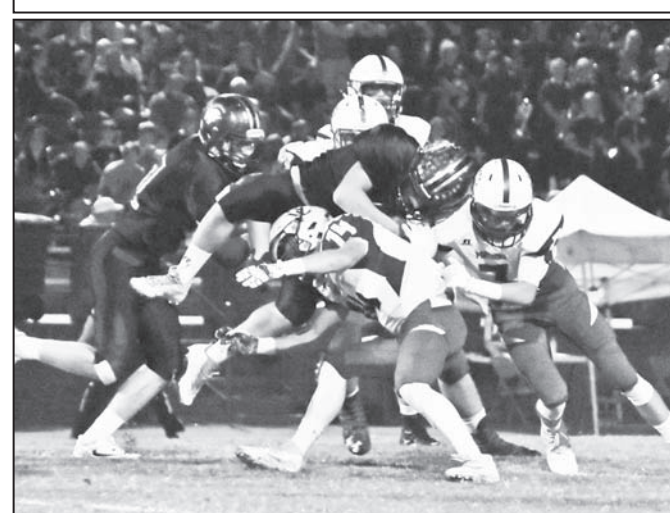


Sawyer Drake tied the game 20-20 with a TD catch. Photo/Todd Forrest



Austin Pattee pulls Union within a TD in the first half. Photo/Todd Forrest

Offense							
Passing	Comp/Att	Yds	TD	Int	Long	2PT	
#8 C. Wright	30 / 44	436	2	1	60	-	
Rushing	Att	Yds	TD	Long	Fum	2PT	
#8 C. Wright	12	100	2	35	1	-	
#24 C. Buzzard	4	14	1	14	-	-	
#22 A. Pattee	2	11	-	10	-	-	
#14 R. Barrett	1	-5	-	-	-	-	
#14 E. Strayer	1	-6	-	-	-	-	
Rest of team	4	-	-	10	-	-	
Receiving	Rec	Yds	TD	Long	Fum	2PT	
#22 A. Pattee	13	168	1	23	-	-	
#21 S. Drake	4	132	1	60	-	-	
#4 K. Hemphill	6	71	-	18	-	-	
#18 L. Dyer	3	27	-	12	-	-	
#12 S. Dobbins	2	14	-	10	-	-	
#15 C. Dockrey	1	14	-	14	-	-	
#84 K. Morlock	1	10	-	10	-	-	
#20 C. Rich	1	8	-	8	-	-	



Riley Barrett and Alec Scott getting low to make a stop. Photo/Todd Forrest

### Basketball Registration at the Union County Recreation Department

**Do Not Miss Out!**

Age Group	Registration Ends
9/10 yrs old	October 27th
11/12 yrs old	October 27th

\*\*Registration fee is \$50.00 and open to both boys and girls. \*\*  
Registration can be completed online at [unioncountyga.gov](http://unioncountyga.gov) or at the Recreation Office located at 310 Wellborn Street.  
If you need any additional information, please call 706-439-6074.