

Sports

See the Sports Section at nghanews.com

Lady Panthers' backcourt leads the way in two Union victories

Union County surrenders fourth-quarter lead in Saturday's loss to Habersham

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@nghanews.com

The Lady Panthers (2-2) won two of three during the week of Thanksgiving, with their lone blemish coming Saturday at the hands of Class 6A Habersham Central at East Forsyth's Adrian Penland Classic.

During its Tuesday, Nov. 22 contest in Blairsville, Union County survived a scrappy, upset-minded Towns County squad to record its fourth straight victory over the Lady Indians. Later in the week, Union County used an early 12-0 run to race ahead during Friday's 48-35 win over Class 5A Chattahoochee (Alpharetta) on day one of the Adrian Penland Classic.

Lady Panthers 45, Towns County 37 - Head Coach Brad Cochran picked up his first varsity coaching win courtesy of 20 combined points from the backcourt duo of Ariel McCarter and Kamryn Mull during Union County's momentum-changing third frame.

"At halftime, we were struggling on offense so I told the girls we need to let our defense create our offense," Cochran said. "We weren't applying enough pressure against Towns. Our press wasn't coming as hard as we wanted it to, so I told them to use our defense to create some points, and that's what we did in the third quarter."

Trailing 15-13 at the intermission, the Lady Panthers snapped out of their first-half offensive doldrums with a 20-point third that saw McCarter lead the charge with a dozen while Mull provided eight.

Union County outscored Towns County 20-10 during the period, turning a two-point deficit into a 33-25 advantage. McCarter opened the second half with a 3-pointer less than 15 seconds in, awarding Union its first lead since 16-15.

Towns County regained the lead at 20-16 at the halfway point of the period, answering McCarter's triple with a 5-0 spurt. But the Lady Panthers fired back with six straight points in 33 seconds, beginning with a Mull basket at the 3:26 mark. McCarter followed with consecutive buckets, scoring in the paint to even the score at 20-20, then turning a steal into 2 points and a 22-20 lead with 2:53 remaining in the quarter.

Mull made it a 25-22 game with a 3-point basket coming on the heels of two Lady Indians free throws, then a McCarter trey broke a 25-25 tie at the 1:21 mark of the third, sparking an 8-0 run. A Lady Panthers steal on the ensuing Towns possession led to a McCarter layup and a 30-25 advantage, then Mull closed the frame with a triple to spot Union a 33-25 margin entering the fourth.

"We picked up some energy on the defensive end and really took it to them," Cochran said. "Then we started feeding off that energy and it became contagious, everybody started getting into it, even the bench."

The Lady Indians quickly cut the deficit in half with baskets on its first two fourth-quarter possessions, but Lara Turner split two free throws and Katelyn Brown drove to the basket for a 36-29 advantage at the 6:20 mark.



Senior guard Corinne Hill scores during the fourth quarter of Union County's win over Chattahoochee on Friday. Photo/Todd Forrest

Towns County went 2-of-6 during three consecutive visits to the charity stripe, but McCarter kept the lead at seven with a dribble-drive. However, the Lady Indians made one last push, beginning with a putback at the 4:26 mark. And with a chance to make it a two-point game 22 seconds later, Towns failed to convert a traditional 3-point play, missing from the line in a 38-35 contest.

McCarter and Corinne Hill each split two free throws to push the margin to five at 40-35 near the 2-minute mark. Morgan Warren provided her team some breathing room, scoring inside to build a 42-35 advantage with 1:12 to play, but Towns refused to go down without a fight, hitting a pair of free throws at the 1:03 mark.

Union County eventually put the game away, quickly breaking the Lady Indians' press, allowing Turner to knock down on a short jumper from the block with 52 seconds left. On Union's next possession, Warren split two free throws to close out the scoring at 45-37 with 26 seconds to go.

McCarter finished with 22 points, eight rebounds and five steals. Mull had 8 points and five boards; Turner chipped in 7 points and four assists. Warren ended with 3 points and four boards; Brown had 2 points and six rebounds. Freshmen Mady Adams and Paula Robertson added 2 points apiece.

Following a low-scoring first frame that saw Towns outscore the home team 5-3, Robertson's basket came via a second-quarter putback to move Union within two at 11-9. Towns answered with consecutive baskets to build its largest margin at 15-9 until McCarter, aided by a turnover, scored twice in the final 15 seconds to slice the deficit to 15-13 at the break.

Senior Sarah Shook led Towns County with 14 points while grabbing eight boards. Sophomore Megan Beaver finished with a double-double, scoring 12 points and pulling down 11 rebounds to go with two steals and a pair of blocks. Junior Breelan Sieveking added 10 points and a team-high four assists.

Team stats: Both squads found a lid on the hoop for most of the game with Towns connecting on 30% (14 for 46) of its shots to 28% (17 for 60)

for Union. The Lady Panthers made 5 of 23 (22%) from deep, while the visitors made 1 of 8 (13%).

At the line, Union went 4 for 11 (36%) and the Lady Indians finished 8 for 18 (44%). Towns County outscored Union 24-20 in the paint but Union owned a 9-4 advantage on second-chance points. The Lady Panthers held a 40-39 rebounding edge and won the turnover battle 25-21.

"It feels great to get that first win, of course it would have been nice to get it against North Hall, but it's still great," said Cochran when asked about his first victory as a varsity head coach. "But to be honest, a win is a win and I know there's a lot more to come. These girls are working hard and I know they're going to win many more games."

The JV team rallied from eight down for a 42-36 win. Freshman Lola Hunter had 16 and Robertson scored 10. Aubrie Akins added 7 points and Hope Taylor had six.

Lady Panthers 48, Chattahoochee 35 - Behind 4-0 in the early going, Union County closed the first quarter with a 10-0 run, then scored the first basket of the second to mount a 12-4 advantage. With Union ahead 14-5, a Chattahoochee trey narrowed the margin to 14-8 until a 5-0 spurt handed the Lady Panthers a 19-8 lead at the midway point of the second frame. Chattahoochee never threatened again as Union County cruised to a 48-35 victory at East Forsyth's Adrian Penland Classic.

"We wanted to apply defensive pressure and keep [Chattahoochee] playing fast," Cochran said. "We knew they were athletic but they only had one guard [that concerned us], so we wanted to get the ball out of her hands and into the hands of girls that didn't want [the ball]."

The Cougars continued hanging around late in the first half when a Turner free throw and a McCarter trey built a 26-13 halftime edge.

A bucket by senior Ivie Chapman saw Union build its largest lead at 35-18 with 2:20 left in the third. A Brown dribble drive kept the margin at 37-20 until a Chattahoochee trey sliced the deficit to 37-23 after three.

A late Cougars' 3-pointer narrowed the gap to 44-34



Kamryn Mull (20) scores in the third quarter vs. Towns as Ariel McCarter looks on. The duo combined for 20 in the period. Photo/Todd Forrest

with 2:35 remaining until consecutive baskets by Hill put the game out of reach.

"We weren't expecting a zone [defense from Chattahoochee], so that slowed us down some on offense, but that's why we applied that pressure so we could try to play at our speed," Cochran said.

McCarter poured in a game-high 17 points to go with six boards and five steals. Hill finished with 12 points on 5-of-10 shooting, hauling in eight rebounds and collecting three steals.

"One thing I've talked about this year with [Hill] is getting more offensive production from her," Cochran said. "We're trying to get her to attack more and go to the basket more. If we're getting 8-12 points a night from her that is beautiful, and she is filling that role very well. It's all very new to her and she told me she's not used to scoring that much, so I told her she needs to get used to it because we need her."

Turner had 9 points and six rebounds, while Brown added 4 points and six rebounds. Robertson scored 2 points and handed out a team-high five assists. Mady Adams had 2 points and seven boards; Chapman pulled down five rebounds while scoring 2 points. Warren ended with five boards; freshmen Hensley Adams and Hunter had two rebounds and one rebound, respectively.

Team stats: The Lady Panthers shot 33% (21 for 66) from the field and limited Chattahoochee to a 23% (13 for 56) clip. Union went 1-of-8 (13%) from downtown and 5 of 9 (56%) at the line. Meanwhile, the Cougars shot 3 of 20 (15%) from deep and 6 of 17 (35%) at the charity stripe.

Union controlled the boards by a 55-38 margin and outscored Chattahoochee 26-20 in the paint.

"That was our plan going in, to control the boards and limit their second chances," Cochran said. "We are able to get them to take quick shots and they were being taken by players that don't want to be taking shots."

Turnovers were almost even with Union committing 15 and forcing 16.

Lady Panthers 35, Habersham Central 48 - Union County ran out of gas down the stretch, surrendering a 20-4 run after holding a 31-28

and went 90 feet for a layup. Habersham kept the lead at five with 4:12 left in the half, but a minute later, Turner put back an offensive board to keep Union with three.

The Raiders converted a turnover into an easy deuce and Mady Adams followed by going back up after securing an offensive board. Another Lady Panthers turnover led to a Habersham layup off an inbounds play, but Turner returned the favor by feeding Hill for two after coming up with a steal in the backcourt.

On its ensuing possession, Habersham stretched its lead to 20-15 at the break with a bucket near the 50-second mark of the second.

Both teams struggled to begin the third until a jumper from Hill at the 6:10 mark. The Raiders responded with a 6-0 spurt, building a 26-17 margin with 2:55 left in the period until a McCarter triple kept the Lady Panthers within a half dozen at 26-20.

The only Lady Panther in double-digits, McCarter finished with a 15-point, 11-rebound double-double. The sophomore guard also dished out four assists and picked up two steals.

Hill finished with 7 points and five rebounds; Mull had 6 points, four boards and two steals. Turner's day ended with 5 points, three rebounds and a blocked shot. Mady Adams had 2 points, two rebounds and a steal. Akins added a free throw and a rebound.

Team stats: Habersham hit on 33% (22 of 66) of its shot attempts, compared to 25% (13 of 52) for Union County. Both teams struggled at the line, where Union made 6 of 14 (43%) and the Raiders hit 2 of 7 (29%).

The Lady Panthers were 4 of 19 (21%) from deep and Habersham finished 2 for 11 (18%). The Raiders controlled the paint, out-rebounding Union County 49-35 and outscoring them 38-16.

Up next: On Tuesday, Union County hosts Class AAA's seventh-ranked White County, a team that already owns a 59-50 win over Habersham in Cleveland. White also defeated Class AA's No. 7 team and Region 8-AA favorite Banks County in a 51-29 rout. Tuesday's tip-off vs. White County is scheduled for 6 p.m. following the JV girls.

"White is a very good and very disciplined team with a few college signees," Cochran said. "They have a high basketball IQ and are very well coached. It's going to be a very fun, fast paced game because they do a lot of the same things we do, so we need to make sure we have all that turkey and dressing out of our system."

On Friday, the Lady Panthers pay a visit to Class AA's fifth-ranked Fannin County at 7 p.m.

"White is going to be tough, but then we have to turn around and play Fannin at their house," Cochran said. "This is going to be my first taste of this rivalry and I've already heard all the chit chat going on. I hear this is a big mountain rivalry, but I know that it's in games and environments like this that real players thrive. They step up to the challenge and I believe we're going to have a few girls that show what they're made of and show their pride."

Sports

See the Sports Section on ngame.com

Basketball photos: Union County at East Forsyth's Adrian Penland Classic

Photos by Todd Forrest



Sophomore Maddox Young returned Friday vs. Rabun Gap.



Sophomore Katelyn Brown drives to the basket vs. Chattahoochee



Sophomore Houston Henry draws a foul vs. Rabun Gap.



Junior Lara Turner goes up in the paint vs. Chattahoochee.



Freshman Cade Dockrey during the second half vs. Rabun Gap



Senior Ivie Chapman knocks down a free throw vs. Chattahoochee



Head coach Corey Garrett (center) returned to the Union County bench on Friday vs. Rabun Gap



Freshman Paula Robertson vs. Chattahoochee



Three days removed from his first coaching win, Brad Cochran won his second game vs. Chattahoochee.

Union County Recreation Department Monthly Hikes for Adults



Register at the Union County Recreation Department for the adult hike adventure! Your guide will be Dustin Rogers, along with Mickey and Patrick. You will see 3 waterfalls, 2 old cemeteries, and an old mill on Tuesday, December 6th from 8:30 AM-5 PM. The hike is 2½ miles and moderate to difficult (steep).

Meet at the Union County Sports Center at 8am to carpool to site. Please wear appropriate clothing/shoes, bring sack lunch, and water.

Please register in person at the Union County Sports Center by Monday, December 5th. Fee is \$5.