

Sports

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Lady Panthers to put unbeaten record to the test this week

Panthers remain in the mix after Riverside escapes with dramatic 4-3 victory

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Business is about to pick up for the unbeaten Lady Panthers, who added a non-region, 1-0 victory to their resume vs Pickens County last week.

Sporting a 5-0-2 mark, Union County is already on the verge of securing one of the top four spots in 8-AA, and consecutive trips to the Class AA State playoffs with a pair of wins this week. Despite coming off a shutout win over Class AAAA's Pickens County, Union Head Coach Tim Hunter still hopes to tighten up a few loose ends that could expose the Lady Panthers over the final three weeks.

"Offensively, we didn't look very sharp (vs Pickens County) which we have to do a better job of with good region teams lurking this week," Coach Hunter said.

However, as the home stretch approaches, the level of competition, and the intensity, both turn it up a notch this week. The Rabun County Lady Cats (2-5, 1-2) await the Lady Panthers on Tuesday, while the



Emma Herum looks for room vs Pickens. The Lady Panthers picked up another win to move to 5-0-2 on the year. Photo/Goal Keeper's Club

Lady Dragons of Jefferson, also unbeaten in 8-AA, pay a visit to Union County on Friday.

"Both of those games have big region and state implications," Coach Hunter said. "Jefferson may be the toughest team on the schedule. However, every team we face for the next

few weeks is really good. Rabun lost a few games because their keeper was out due to injury, and she is a really good player. So there is no way to take any of our upcoming games lightly."

As for Union County's men, the shorthanded Panthers suffered their first Region 8-AA loss on Friday when they fell to Riverside Military Academy (2-7, 2-1) in a 4-3 shootout.

"I was very upset for our guys," Hunter said. "Not so much for the result, but for how hard they played and to not come away with a win. Riverside is a very quality team with good skill and athleticism at almost every position. Their record isn't very good but that's a reflection of the tough schedule they've played."

Now the Panthers must regroup as they also face the task of two crucial road games this week, but Coach Hunter realizes that his team is capable of taking down anyone in 8-AA.

"I feel like our guys can play with anyone in the region," he said, "even shorthanded like we've had to in the past few games."

Rabun County (4-3-1, 3-0) and Jefferson's boys currently sit atop Region 8-AA without a loss. Union does share two common opponents with the



Kyle Hamby with a header during the first half of Union's 8-AA contest with Riverside Military Academy. Photo/Todd Forrest

Wildcats in Towns County and Greene County.

Rabun spent Towns County home with a 2-1 loss back on March 12, one day after Union absorbed a 1-0 shutout loss in Hiwassee.

On March 7th, Rabun came out on top in a 1-0 affair against the visitors from Greene County. Exactly one week later, on March 14th, the Panthers picked up a 4-1 victory in Greensboro.

As for the Lady Panthers and Rabun, Union and Towns scratched and clawed to a 2-2 draw back on March 11. The following day, the Lady Indians disposed of the Lady Cats 3-0.

The week prior, Rabun throttled Greene County 9-1. Meanwhile, the Lady Panthers went on the road to shutout Greene by a score of 4-0.

Union and Jefferson have one common opponent - Washington-Wilkes. The Lady Dragons mercy-ruled Wilkes 10-0, and the Dragons dominated their meeting at Wilkes, 9-1 on March 14th.

Union hosted Wilkes on March 7th and the Panthers

needed overtime to put away the Tigers (1-3-1, 0-2) in a 2-1 contest. The Lady Panthers, on the other hand, overpowered Wilkes 7-0 behind four goals by Maddy Morlock.

Morlock was also the difference maker in Union's 1-0 win over Pickens last week. The Lady Panthers' lone goal came when Morlock redirected Mary Murphy's corner kick for the score.

"We dominated possession but couldn't get the ball in the back of the net," Coach Hunter said. "They played very defensively, putting a lot of their players at the back."

On the defensive side, the Lady Panthers have shutout the opposition in five of seven games this season and are showing no signs of easing up, which is always comforting as a coach.

"Our defense and midfield controlled possession and kept the ball on their half almost the entire game," Coach Hunter said. "Whenever they did threaten, Jo-

anna Van Pelt either secured the ball or beat the forward to it and blasted it to safety. She played well and answered the call every



Mary Murphy

time she was tested." The playing of Emma Smith, Marissa Spaulding, Erin Innis, and Ema Herum also drew praise from their coach.

"Emma Smith played well at the back for us and she has been a good constant for us this season," Coach Hunter said. "Marissa Spaulding also played very well. Erin Innis did a really good job defending their mids and maintaining possession. Ema Herum also played one of her better games at outside mid."

During Union's 4-3 loss to Riverside on Friday, the Eagles built a 3-1 lead in the early stages of the second half before the Panthers surged back to tie things up.

"I got a little worried that our young team might get their heads down," Coach Hunter said. "But we stormed back and took control of the ball game."

The difference turned out to be a free kick by Riverside after Union was whistled for a foul. The visitors took advantage of the call and turned it into a goal and a win.

"We had several shots on goal and had the opportunity to take the lead but we couldn't convert," Coach Hunter said.

Kyle Hamby scored twice for the Panthers and Keaton Dyer's goal tied things at 3-3.

Game times for this week are 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. at Rabun County on Tuesday. On Friday, Union will host Jefferson at 5:30 and 7:30 p.m.



Parker McCombs battles for possession vs Riverside. Photo/Todd Forrest

Jefferson escapes with 6-4 win after Panther-Dragon barnburner

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Last season, Union County (10-4, 3-3) dropped a pair of 10 inning games to the Dragons, denying the Panthers a Region Championship.

In their first meeting of 2014, it looked like déjà vu all over again.

Like the two previous meetings, the teams were tied at 1-1 entering the bottom of the sixth.

But that's where the similarities end. Jefferson right hander Max Ford, who signed with the University of Georgia in December, yielded two runs in the inning and the Panthers were riding high on a 3-1 lead.

Three outs away from one of the biggest regular season wins in recent history, the defense came unraveled behind senior ace Lane Everett (3-2).

After surrendering a first inning homer, Everett settled down and held the Dragons in check through six innings.

A leadoff double got Jefferson going in the seventh and the next two Dragons would bring on an error, with the second bringing in a run.

To make matters worse, the Panthers suffered from a blown call that brought in the tying run, still with no outs.

Sophomore centerfielder Sam Gilbert made a diving catch on a liner, saving a run and recording the first out. Unfortunately, the umpire didn't see it that way and



Hunter Hughes singles and scores vs Jefferson. Photo/Todd Forrest

took away Gilbert's web gem and ruled it a hit.

Jefferson got the go-ahead run with one out and Everett induced a grounder for out number two. However a two-out, two-run double was the backbreaker, staking the Dragons to a 6-3 lead.

The Panthers got one back in their final at bat when Josh Daniel singled and advanced on a wild pitch. Joseph Mancuso singled with two outs to score Daniel. Everett followed with a walk to put the tying run on base but Jefferson was able to get out of the jam with a grounder to second.

The top of the Panther order provided most of the offense as Daniel and Hunter Hughes combined for 5 hits and 2 runs. Chase Barnett had a 1-for-2 day, including the tying run.

Union didn't get any time

to mourn the loss as they traveled to Murphy, NC the following day. The Panthers took a 5-0 lead before posting five more in the sixth to take a 10-6 victory. Mancuso picked up his second win of the year and Tyler Odom recorded the save.

On Friday the Panthers made the trip to Greene County to conclude a week that saw the best and the worst that Region 8-AA has to offer.

In game one of the twin bill, Union pounded out 14 hits in a 19-7 win over the Tigers.

Juniors Jake Sisum and Barnett drove in 2 runs each, while sophomore Andrew Brown brought in two, as well.

Senior Garrett Nix moved to 2-1 on the year as he combined with Hughes for 6 strikeouts, 9 walks, and 3 earned runs on the



Lane Everett



Chase Barnett

ground.

In game two, Daniel (1-0) was perfect for four innings as Union ended things early 16-0.

Lance Rich and Parker Daniel led the charge with two and three RBIs respectively, and Robert Prunier added a triple

Union visits Riverside on Tuesday at 5 p.m. and is at Rabun next Monday, Apr. 1st at 5 p.m.



Josh Daniel had two hits and a run vs Jefferson. Photo/Todd Forrest

UCHS Varsity Panthers 19 - 7 Greene												
Friday, March 21st, 2014												
Away League												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E		
UCHS	0	4	3	5	4	3	19	14	3			
GRN	1	0	2	0	4	0	7	4	4			

UCHS Varsity Panthers 16 - 0 Greene												
Friday, March 21st, 2014												
Away League												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E		
UCHS	1	3	3	9	16	8	0					
GRN	0	0	0	0	0	0	2					

Jefferson 6 - 4 UCHS Varsity Panthers												
Tuesday, March 18th, 2014												
Home League												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E		
JFRS	0	1	0	0	0	5	6	8	2			
UCHS	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	4	9	4		

BATTING												
Union County	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	TB					
J Daniel	4	1	2	0	0	1	2					
H Hughes	4	1	3	0	0	1	3					
J Mancuso	4	0	1	1	0	3	1					
L Everett	3	1	1	1	0	1	2					
J Burks	4	0	1	1	0	0	1					
J Sisum	3	0	0	0	0	1	0					
S Gilbert	3	0	0	0	0	2	0					
G Nix	2	0	0	0	0	1	0					
L Rich	1	0	0	0	0	1	0					
C Barnett	3	1	1	0	0	1	1					
A Brown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					

PITCHING												
Union County	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR					
L Everett	7.0	8	6	2	1	8	1					
Totals	7.0	8	6	2	1	8	1					

UCHS Varsity Panthers 10 - 5 Murphy												
Thursday, March 20th, 2014												
Away Non-League												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E		
UCHS	1	0	2	0	2	5	0	10	11	2		
MRPH	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	5	5	5		

BATTING												
Union County	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	TB					
J Daniel	3	1	0	0	1	1	0					
H Hughes	5	1	2	1	0	0	3					
J Mancuso	5	3	1	0	0	1	2					
L Rich	2	1	1	2	0	1	1					
L Everett	2	1	2	1	0	0	3					
J Burks	4	1	1	1	0	0	1					
J Sisum	4	0	3	3	0	0	5					
G Nix	4	0	0	0	0	1	0					
C Barnett	2	1	0	0	0	1	0					
T Odom	3	1	1	0	0	0	1					
R Prunier	1	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Totals	35	10	11	8	2	4	16					

PITCHING												
Union County	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR					
J Daniel	4.0	2	3	2	5	2	0					
T Odom	3.0	3	2	1	1	2	0					
Totals	7.0	5	5	2	6	4	0					

UCHS Varsity Panthers 16 - 0 Greene												
Friday, March 21st, 2014												
Away League												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E		
UCHS	1	3	3	9	16	8	0					
GRN	0	0	0	0	0	0	2					

BATTING												
Union County	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	TB					
J Daniel	2	1	0	0	2	1	0					
H Hughes	2	2	1	0	1	0	1					
L Everett	2	2	1	1	2	0	1					
J Mancuso	1	0	0	0	1	1	0					
A Brown	1	0	0	0	0	0	0					
J Burks	2	0	1	0	0	1	1					
L Rich	1	1	1	2	1	0	1					
T Odom	3	2	1	0	1	1	1					
R Prunier	1	3	1	0	2	0	3					
D Groves	1	0	1	1	0	1	0					
C Barnett	3	1	1	3	0	2	1					
P Bear	0	1	0	0	0	0	0					
CR: S Gilbert	0	3	0	0	0	0	0					
Totals	20	16	8	7	11	6	10					

PITCHING												
Union County	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR					
J Daniel	4.0	0	0	0	0	9	0					
Totals	4.0	0	0	0	0	9	0					