

# Sports

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## Panthers put up 21 in fourth to pull away at Andrews

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Andrews, NC - For more than three quarters the Panthers (2-1) were living dangerously.

Early in the fourth, Union was clinging to a 13-6 lead, on the road, with the offense sputtering, and a defense who had been on the field way too long.

Facing poor position following a block in the back on the Panthers, the offense was staring at a long field.

That's when Union went 80 yards on six plays, giving the Panthers some breathing room at 20-6.

The scoring drive was sparked by a 62-yard pass from sophomore quarterback Joseph Mancuso to sophomore wide out Sam Gilbert on 3rd-and-16.

A false start penalty moved Union back 5 yards but on the ensuing play, Mancuso found Sam Gilbert once again, this time on 21-yard scoring strike with 6:06 to play.

Sophomore Jake Walts kick was good, despite repeated late hits on the Panther kicker.

The personal fouls on Union's kicker only backfired on the Wildcats as Union took off their belts and took Andrews behind the woodshed for a good old fashioned whipping.

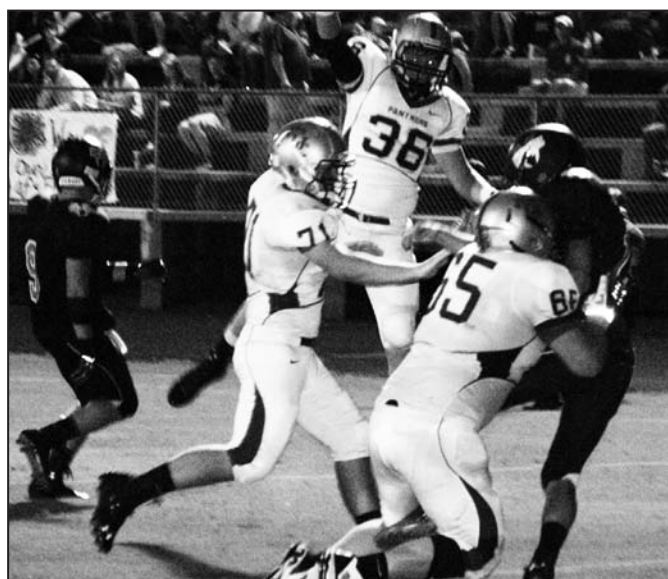
After a touchback by T.J. Smith, the defense forced a quick fumble at the Wildcat 35-yard line, setting up the Panthers with a short field.

Mancuso found Robert Prunier for 30 yards, giving Union 1st-and-goal at the five.

One play later, sophomore Nick Whittle found the endzone. Walts again connected on the PAT despite another cheap shot. Instead of letting emotion get the better of them, Union shot back with another touchdown pass for good measure with 4:26 remaining.

The defense limited Andrews to one-yard in three plays, bringing up a punt.

Junior Robert Prunier's punt return gave Union a 1st-



Linemen Luther Jones (65), Reid Watson (71), and linebacker Nic Sparks (36) bring the heat on the quarterback. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sophomore quarterback Joseph Mancuso (center) dives into the endzone from a yard out for Union's first score. Photo/Todd Forrest and on 4th-and-goal, Mancuso kept it himself and punched it in from a yard out.

After the defense forced a three-and-out, junior Ralston Drake entered at quarterback. He quickly found Gilbert for 9 yards, Whittle carried for 5-yards, and Drake kept it himself for a 9-yard rush.

Whittle had a 16-yard carry, Drake added a 12-yard and 13-yard gain - putting Union at the Andrews three.

However a fumble would hand the ball back to the home team. After allowing a pair of first downs, the Panther defense got a fourth down stop at their own 44-yard line.

Whittle broke off a 14-yarder, Prunier hauled in a 28-yard pass from Mancuso, then a 12-yard catch. Prunier would cap off the drive with a two-yard catch, making it a 13-0 game at the break.

"We wanted to win but we're also trying to get better," Coach Allison said. "We were trying to do some stuff in our run game. We didn't want to make any mistakes with the passing game and give them some momentum, especially when we

Early it appeared as if Union would rout the Wildcats in similar fashion to the 2012 contest where Union won 41-13. Sophomore Andrew Brown picked off a Wildcat pass on the opening series of the game, returning the interception to the Union 43-yard line. Prunier carried for a 10-yard gain, and Whittle took a screen for 37 yards for a first-and-goal.

An offside gave Union the ball inside the 5-yard line



Chase Barnett (44) brings down the Andrews back. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sophomore safety Andrew Brown (25) gives chase as junior lineman Dakota Evans (75) assists on the tackle. Photo/Todd Forrest

are up 13-0. We're really young up front and we're playing four sophomores and one junior on the offensive line. We thought we could get wide on them with some outside stretch plays and some bubble screens. Nick (Whittle) caught a screen and took it a long way early. We were trying to do that but we still made some mistakes that hurt us."

The third quarter opened with Union driving to the Andrews 33-yard line before the Panthers were stopped on 4th and 7.

Andrews went to work, picking up two first downs but



Nick Whittle



Coach Allison discusses a call.

we had only 42 offensive plays. When you allow a team to stay on the field that long, it's hard to get into any type of rhythm offensively."

Mancuso finished 14-of-20 for 314 yards and three scores. Drake was 1-for-3 for 11 yards and rushed five times for 21 yards.

Sam Gilbert caught four balls for 101 yards, Prunier caught five passes for 71 yards and rushed for 10 yards, Whittle had two grabs, also for 71 yards. He carried 12 times for 70 yards. Rogers had six catches for 65 yards and Brett Dietz had one catch for 17 yards.

Union County has the week off before visiting Washington-Wilkes on Sept. 27th.

The Tigers' defense smothered the Panthers last year in a 36-0 victory in Blairsville.

"We'll wait until next Monday to get ready for Washington-Wilkes," Coach Allison said. "We've got some corrections that we need to make ourselves. We're really inexperienced and young in the secondary, at two of the linebacker spots so we need to get some things corrected. Some missed tackles that we need to get fixed. Coaching wise we will start looking at them a little bit. Player-wise we got to take a few days to work on the basics and fundamentals like blocking and tackling."



Union's cheerleaders hold four fingers in the air to signal the start of the fourth quarter. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sam Gilbert

## Union drops three Region games

By Todd Forrest  
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The Union County Lady Panthers had a difficult week, dropping a double header at Social Circle on Tuesday and falling in extra innings to Jefferson on Thursday.

The Panthers must now regroup before hosting Washington-Wilkes in a double header on Thursday with Region 8-AA playoff implications on the line.

The Panthers did pick up a non-Region victory over White County on Wednesday.

### Social Circle 2 Union County 1

Sophomore Laken Chambers allowed just two runs but Union County couldn't get the offense going in a 2-1 loss at Social Circle.

The Lady Panther bats could only summon one run, striking out three times and recording just three hits.

Social Circle never trailed after scoring two runs in the first on two singles.

In the seventh, Union pushed across their only run of the day on a groundout by Karley Nix.

### Social Circle 6 Union County 0

Junior Haylle King went 2-for-3 at the plate, but the Lady Panthers fell 6-0 at Social Circle in the second game of a double header.

The Lady Panthers only managed six hits, despite Chambers not allowing an earned run on six hits in seven innings of work.

We have been struggling this year a little," Union County Head Coach Jessica Stewart said. "We went to the Oconee tournament and played some really good teams and lost four of five there and our momentum took a dive. We did have cold bats



Union County's Halle King has been vital to the Lady Panther offense all season long. Photo/Todd Forrest

and made several errors against Social.

### Union County 4 White County 1

Lydia Arrowood went 2-for-3 as Union County took a 4-1 victory at White County on Wednesday.

The Lady Panthers stayed on top from wire-to-wire after taking the lead in the first, scoring one run on an RBI double by Kelsey Nix.

Union County added two more runs in the top of the sixth. A sacrifice fly by Karley Nix scored Allie Stroman to open the scoring in the frame. That was followed by Maddie Garrett scoring on a passed ball.

"I think we played well against white and we really needed a win to get us back on track," Stewart said. "We played really good against Jefferson and it could've went either way. I feel much more confident after the White and Jefferson game that we are going to finish the season strong."

### Jefferson 5 Union County 4

Chambers did all she could

but it wasn't enough to get past Jefferson, as Union lost 5-4 in eight innings at Jefferson.

Chambers had a 3-3 day at the plate. She doubled in the fourth inning and singled in the second and seventh innings.

The top of the second saw Union County take an early 2-0 lead after Kelsey Nix doubled, Courtney Busbee doubled, scoring Kelsey Nix. Union County scored again when Kendra Tanner scored on an RBI single by Chambers.

"I do think we played nearly perfect in the Jefferson game," Stewart said. "Chambers gave up a 3-run homerun and we were still able to battle back from it. We just weren't able to execute in the 8th inning. Jefferson right now is the No. 1 seed in 8AA and we are very capable of beating them and hope to make it to the Region Championship and face them again."

Union County will face Washington Wilkes on Thursday for Senior Night, beginning at 4 p.m.

"They are a well coached team that made it to the Sweet 16 last year," Stewart said. The key will be good defense and getting key hits with runners on base."

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