

Sports

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Panthers improve to 6-0; clash with Greene Co. up next

UC to face toughest test to date when Tigers roll into town looking to knock Panthers into fourth in 8-AA

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Senior quarterback Joseph Mancuso etched his name in the Union County High School record books on Friday night, breaking Kolt Owenby's school record of 7,046 career passing yards while taking care of business in a Region 8-AA matchup with Oglethorpe County.

Mancuso connected on 13-of-18 pass attempts for 204 yards and a pair of touchdowns to go along with 111 yards and two scores on the ground as Union disposed of the winless Patriots, 41-6.

Needing only 49 yards to pass Owenby entering the game, Mancuso now holds the career passing yards record with 7,201 yards-and-counting.

Union County also made history with its sixth win of the season, giving the Panthers four straight winning seasons, something that has only happened once before. From 1974-77, they won 29 games over a four-year span, making the Class of 1977-78 the most successful in the history of the program.

Currently, this year's senior class has 27 wins on its resume with four games remaining.

"Three years ago we were just trying to get a winning season," said Union Head Coach Brian Allison. "But I knew this was a good group and we don't get these groups very often so we're blessed to have them."

Sitting at 6-0 and moving up one spot to 9th in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution's* High School Football poll, the Panthers must now face off with Greene County (3-3). The Tigers will not only be the most skilled team Union County has faced in 2015, but they will be chomping at the bits to get another crack at the Panthers, spoil homecoming, knock them out of the Top 10, and more importantly, deal a serious blow to Union's playoff positioning.

For two consecutive years, the Panthers have played spoiler to Greene County. Last year, Union traveled to Greensboro and held on to a 42-27 victory that was the difference in the Panthers finishing second and the Tigers placing third in the final Region standings.

Two years ago, Greene came to Blairsville on Homecoming and Union demolished the Tigers 42-0 - securing its first State playoff berth since 2001 and denying Greene County the chance at reaching consecutive State Tournaments.

Last week the Tigers fell 19-12 at home to Washington Wilkes after knocking off Oglethorpe on the road the week before.

Greene County returns its quarterback and two All-Region selections at running back and receiver.

"They're strong at the skill position," Coach Allison said. "Their running back gave us some problems last year, and they gave us some problems throwing the football. They're going to have more speed than what we've seen in



Coach Robby Roxbury with the Panthers defense during the first half vs Oglethorpe County. Photo/Todd Forrest



Bo Lynch, Zach Stone, Zach Gilliam, and Eddie Kemp corral the Oglethorpe ball carrier. Photo/Todd Forrest

a while." And it's not only the offense that worries Coach Allison. He believes Greene County will create matchup problems on both sides of the football. "There's going to be matchups unlike we've seen in the last six games so I think they're going to be a challenge offensively, and defensively," he said. "The biggest issues I see are us being able to tackle them and can we block their defensive front."

In the win over the Patriots, Greene, like the Panthers, dropped six touchdowns on Oglethorpe in a 42-20 Tiger victory.

In Union's 41-6 victory over the Patriots, they scored 14 points during a rainy first quarter and with the precipitation moving out for the remainder of the contest, they held a 21-0 advantage at the break. The Panthers tacked on two more touchdowns in the third and one more in the early stages of the fourth quarter.

When Coach Allison began getting the younger guys some playing-time, Union led 41-0. Oglethorpe finally got on the board with 53 seconds left in the game for a 41-6 final score.

"The game went pretty much as I expected," Coach Allison said. "They did have two-or-three skill guys on offense that gave us some problems. Their misdirection offense took us a long time to prepare for. Those guys do a really good

job coaching football, and like I said, they have three-or-four guys that can play."

When asked what impressed him the most about his team's offense, Coach Allison pointed out that his offense scored on every possession except one.

The Panthers won the opening toss and elected to defer until the second half, and on the opening drive of the game, the Patriots converted two fourth downs before the Union defense denied them on 4th-and-5 at their own 37 yard line.

The drive chewed almost six minutes off the clock so the Panthers' offense didn't take the field until the 6:20 mark of the quarter.

Beginning at their own 45-yard line, Mancuso had carries of 9 yards and 10 yards before capping off the drive himself with a 27-yard scoring run.

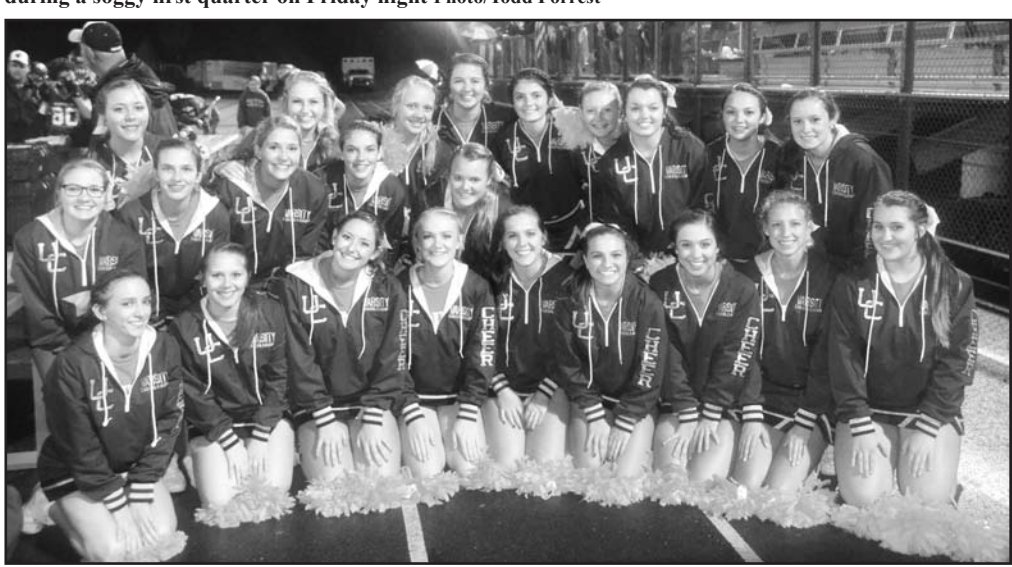
On the ensuing Patriots' possession, Eddie Kemp handed the ball back to the offense when the senior defensive back pounced on an Oglethorpe fumble at the 25-yard line.

On the first play, a jet sweep to senior Sam Gilbert went for 9-plus yards. Junior Bo Lynch moved the chains with a 2-yard carry. A first down run by Mancuso went for 8 yards before Lynch punched it in from 5 yards out.

Union's defense forced a three-and-out and following a punt, the offense took over at its own 31-yard line with 15 sec-



The Panthers' Purple Swarm defense, led by junior Chandler Day (67) smother a Patriot running back during a soggy first quarter on Friday night. Photo/Todd Forrest



The Union County cheerleaders with pink pom poms and hair bows for the annual Pink-Out game for cancer awareness month. Photo/Todd Forrest

onds left in the first quarter.

As the second quarter opened, the Panthers were back on the move. Mancuso and Lynch hooked up for a 7-yard completion, then on second down, sophomore Logan Dyer hauled in a pass for 15 yards. Sophomore Cole Wright followed that up with a 16-yard reception.

After runs by Lynch, Mancuso, junior Nic Rodriguez, then a pass interference call on Oglethorpe, Union was looking at 1st-and-Goal from the nine.

At the conclusion of a second down run by Mancuso, the Panthers were flagged for a personal foul that moved the offense back to the 20-yard line.

A third down pass sailed incomplete, and on fourth down, a 37-yard field goal attempt went wide left - keeping the score 14-0, midway through the second quarter.

The Patriots offense converted a 4th-and-1 and moved into Panther territory before their next drive unraveled.

On 3rd-and-9, Oglethorpe threw deep down the middle of the field and it appeared as if the receiver's feet got tangled up with corner back Josh Daniel. Both players fell to the ground as the ball hit the turf around the 20-yard line.

The receiver immediately jumped back to his feet, and realizing there was no flag for pass interference, he verbally expressed his disagreement with the no-call. That did, however, draw a flag for unsportsmanlike conduct, and when he continued to give his two cents worth regarding the officiating, he

draw a second unsportsmanlike penalty.

The penalties moved the Patriots all the way back to their own 17-yard line, where they were forced to punt.

An excellent kick pushed Union back to its own 37-yard line but it wasn't enough to keep the home team from tacking on another score.

A 15-yard run by Lynch and a 21-yard completion to Dyer had the Panthers on the move until a pair of holding penalties forced Union into a 3rd-and-33.

Mancuso used his legs to regain most of the yardage on a 20-yard pickup. On 4th-and-13, he went to Daniel on a jailbreak screen that was good for 17 yards and a first down. On the very next play, Mancuso cashed in from 13-yards out to give Union a 20-0 lead at the half.

On the opening drive of the second half, Lynch moved the chains twice with a pair of first down runs before Mancuso found Daniel, wide open down the near sideline for a 43-yard scoring strike.

Just 130 seconds into the third quarter, Union stretched its lead to 27-0.

The defense forced the Patriots into another punting situation following a three-and-out, and the offense took advantage with another quick score.

Starting at their own 40-yard line, a completion to Kierman went for 7-yards, plus another 15 yards tacked on for a hit out-of-bounds. Mancuso went to Gilbert for 6 yards before keeping it himself for 10 yards.

On 2nd-and-7, Mancuso hit Gilbert on a post route in the

back of the endzone to make it a 34-0 game.

Sophomore defensive lineman R.J. Banton blew up an Oglethorpe fourth down screen pass, almost coming up with the interception on the ensuing possession.

The stop gave the ball back to the Panthers' offense, who began at their own 40 with 1:27 left in the third period.

On 3rd-and-9, Mancuso and Wright hooked up for 10 yards. As the fourth quarter opened, with a running clock, Lynch and Rodriguez pounded the Patriots Rodriguez with five consecutive carries. On carry No. 6, Lynch weaved his way for 19 yards and a score.

The touchdown was Lynch's second of the game and his team's final score of the night.

Lynch finished the game with 77 yards rushing. The visitors used a 6-yard touchdown pass with 33 seconds remaining to avoid the shutout.

"The (first team defense) had a shutout and that's a positive," Coach Allison said. "We need confidence with four tough games coming up and it's going to take everything we've got to win another ball game."

Daniel caught two passes for a team-high 63 yards and one score. Wright finished with 39 receiving yards on three grabs, while Gilbert had three catches for 32 yards and a score.

Sophomore Logan Dyer set career-highs with three receptions and 41 yards.

Union County Cross Country runs strong at Unicoi

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Helen - Union County's Cross Country teams traveled to White County where the ladies placed ninth out of 18 teams and the guys were 16th out of 27 teams.

The Lady Panthers' times were as follows:
Emma Garrison was 27th with a time of 21:33.

Emmi Schakat placed 29th with a time of 21:37.

In 52nd was Sage Rouston with a time of 22:46.

In 56th was Stephanie Busse with a time of 22:55.

Destiny Orellana placed 78th with a time of 24:27.

Kaitlyn Gallagher placed 100th with a time of 25:33.

Cora Bauman was 109th with a time of 26:51.

The Lady Panthers finished with an overall score of 242, which was 24 points

behind eighth place Chestatee and 35 back of seventh place Buford.

The Panthers times were as follows:
In 31st place was Lance Underwood with a time of 17:33.

In 95th was Colby Ives with a time of 18:41.

In 96th was Jacob Kelley with a time of 18:41.

Timothy Murphy was 102nd with a time of 18:49.

Gehrig Patterson was 111th with a time of 19:13.

Adam Bachman came in 115th with a time of 19:17.

Jakob Brown placed 121st with a time of 19:28.

The Panthers finished with 435 points, six points ahead of 17th place Lumpkin County, 86 points ahead of 18th place Hart County, and 90 points in front of 19th place Mt. Area Christian Academy.

The Panthers were 73 points behind 15th place Banks County.



Timothy Murphy



Jakob Brown



Stephanie Busse



Emmi Schakat