

Allison's Panthers well aware of what's at stake Friday night at Rabun

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

For one year now, last year's home loss to Rabun County has left a sour taste in the mouth's of Head Coach Brian Allison's Panthers.

Unable to punch the ball in from the goal line and watching Rabun's standout Charlie Woerner pound the Union County defense for 4-5 yards a pop as they delivered gut punch after gut punch to a staggered defense on a game-clinching drive where the Panthers' defense was unable to get off the field following what seemed a hundred third-and-shorts.

According to Union Head Coach Brian Allison, Rabun is a team that averages around 5-6 yards on first downs and gets into a lot of second and third downs only needing a yard or two to move the chains.

"We're going to have to do a better job on first downs if we want to have a chance," Coach Allison said. "We're also going to have to be really physical on both sides of the ball and make sure we're doing a good job of tackling."

The Panthers learned their lesson last year that 9-1 isn't quite the same as 10-0. Hosting a first round playoff game is nice, but a Region 8-AA title is much nicer.

The victory over Washington Wilkes three weeks later was a signature win that the program could hang its hat on. However, going into the bye week with the sting of a loss to your Region rival in the pit of your stomach is something the Panthers expe-



At Rabun, Union will be looking to its senior leaders Joseph Mancuso (9) on offense and Andrew Brown (25) on defense. Photo/Todd Forrest

rienced last season.

With last year's loss under their belts, this year's senior class remembers what last year felt like. In fact, the loss was still with the Panthers at Riverside two weeks later as they trailed for the entire first half.

What would a win do for the program?

A victory would prove that Union County football has arrived. If a ranked Panthers' squad can knock off a higher ranked Rabun team, a lot of folks across the state will have to take notice.

A win also puts the Panthers in the drivers' seat for a Region title and a 10-0 season, although Washington-Wilkes might have something to say about that.

But for now, Rabun Coun-

ty is Union's State Championship game.

"They are loaded talented," Coach Allison said. "They had a couple of guys move in, including a running back that is pretty good. They've got several good receivers. They're just a solid, solid football team."

Rabun is breaking in a new quarterback this year in sophomore Bailey Fisher (#14), who plays mistake free and has been an excellent game manager for Coach Lee Shaw's offense.

On a personal level, a win would certainly give this senior class the ammunition needed to proclaim itself the best in school history. They are one win away from equaling the 1977-78 class as the winningest in school history and a win over a Top 5 team certainly can't tarnish their



legacy.

If the Panthers go on to win Region and pick up their first State Tournament win in school history, this will be game that propels them to that level.

When Coach Allison was asked what he's going to say to his guys about the game and what he's going to use to motivate them, his answer was simple.

"We're not going to talk about it a whole lot to be honest with you," he said. "We just need to go over and play the game, play hard, and make sure we're ready to go."

When asked what area's he is confident in, Coach Allison likes his team's chances in the trenches.

"They lost some lineman from last year so I think we can match up with them up front a

little bit better than we did last year," he said.

Union County is 16-34 all time vs Rabun and has lost the last three contests by an average of 22 points. The last time they met in Tiger, Rabun cruised to a 38-10 victory.

However, this is a much hungrier Panthers squad than the last two that met Rabun on the field.

The Wildcats offense is well balanced, averaging 216 yards passing and 188 yards rushing while boasting one of top defenses in the state.

In seven games, the Wildcats are allowing less than 8 points-per-game while recording 7 tackles-for-loss a game.

Linebacker Rhodes Jones (#3) is their anchor on that side of the ball, along with sopho-

more Dawson Hendricks (#21), and team sack leader, freshman Austin Sosebee (#66).

Senior defensive back Eli Gibson (#3) is back to anchor the secondary as well carry the rock and one of Rabun's rushing leaders.

On the season, he is averaging 6.9 yards-per-carry. Senior Charlie Woerner (#34) is at 8 YPC and junior Cal Drummond (#22) is rushing for 7.6 YPC. Fisher, the teams leading rusher is averaging just under 6 yards-a-carry. The sophomore is also completing 70-percent of his passes and has a touchdown-to-interception ratio of 3-to-1.

Woerner is the teams leading receiver at 15 yards-per-catch. Sophomore Dilyn Nichols (#5) averages 11 YPC and senior Tristan Huggins (#10) is one of the team's greatest big play threats at 23 yards-a-grab.

Let's pack the stands at Rabun County on Friday night and make our presence felt as we support our young men who leave it all on the field.

Teams like this Panther squad don't come around very often, especially in the mountains, (same can be said for Rabun) so lets enjoy it while we can.

And win or lose on Friday night, we're still going to love our Panthers and turn out in droves for Senior Night on Oct. 30th before we take Washington Wilkes by storm.

This is a special group of young men. Let them know they're not alone as they travel to Rabun to play in front of a hostile home crowd in what will likely be dubbed the "Game of the Week" by local media outlets.

Union Cross Country sweeps at Fannin



Seniors Emmi Schakat (left) and Emma Garrison (right) placed second and third at Fannin to lead the Lady Panthers to a first place overall finish. For the guys, sophomore Lance Underwood came in first as the Panthers capped off the sweep later in the day. Teams competing were Fannin, Gilmer and Tri-County Early College. This week Union County will host a home meet at Meeks Park at 4:30 p.m.

Still unbeaten... continued from page 12A

and the offensive line creating a gigantic hole in the middle of the defense, Mancuso went untouched into the endzone.

Senior Knox Kiernan, who was perfect on his seven extra point attempts, split the uprights - making it a 21-7 contest.

"They (offensive line) did a great job," Coach Allison said. "We blocked (them) all night long. Bo ran hard. Joe ran hard. It was a good night."

Entering the contest, one area of concern for Coach Allison was his team's ability to block Greene's defensive front, and when asked what his line's grade was for the game, Coach Neal Setzer's offensive line passed with flying colors.

"I thought they gave an A performance," Coach Allison said.

The Panthers defense continued to turn up the heat and forced its second straight

three-and-out but an illegal motion forced the offense into its only punt of the night, despite a pair of quick passes to Kiernan that went for 14 and 7 yards.

After a Tiger fumble bounced into the hands of Stone, Lynch sliced and diced his way for 42 yards. Three plays later, Mancuso took a bootleg around the edge of the defense for 14 yards. Four run plays later, Mancuso dove over the goal line on a 5-yard touchdown carry with 1:46 before halftime.

The Tigers would take over from their own 30 with 1:39 on the clock and 54 seconds later, would trim their deficit to just two touchdowns despite looking dead in the water just moments earlier.

Mancuso would finish the contest with an efficient showing through the air. The Richmond commit connected on 12-of-14 passes for 137

yards and a score. On the ground he carried 19 times for 122 yards and 4 scores.

Thompson led the team in receiving in his first game back in four weeks. The junior recorded 4 catches for 55 yards while Gilbert was limited to 3 grabs and 26 yards. Kiernan caught 3 passes for 28 and sophomore Logan Dyer had a 21-yard reception. Wright's touchdown catch was the sophomore's only grab of the day.

Junior linebacker Luke Winkler was also back in action for the first time since going down in the first half at Fannin County. During the first three games of the 2015 season, Winkler led the team with more than 60 tackles and recorded 6 assisted tackles vs Greene.

Up next the Panthers visit Rabun County on Friday for a 7:30 p.m. kickoff. Union is then off the following Friday.

Region Tourney... continued from page 12A

The Lady Panthers were the guests on the scoreboard in game two and used it to their advantage. In the top of the first, Union got 2 runs before adding 3 more in the second, which turned out to be more than enough offense.

Tanner led off the game with her eighth triple of the season and Nix brought her home with an infield single. Nix would steal second, advance to third on a passed ball, and score on a Lawn ground out.

Chambers worked around a leadoff single in the bottom of the first without any further damage and Garrison led off the second inning with a base hit. She stole second and reached third on an Arnold grounder before Poteete put runners at the corners with a one-out walk.

With Tanner at the plate, Poteete stole second and Garrison scored on the throw. Poteete later advanced to third on another Wilkes' passed ball.

Tanner eventually drew a free pass and Chambers knocked in a pair with a two-out single to left.

The Lady Tigers put two aboard with one out in the third but Chambers pitched out of the jam with a strikeout of 2014 All Region selection Jada Brittain, then got Zanila Booker, another returning member from the All Region Team, to ground out to Nix at

second.

The Lady Panthers made it 6-0 in the fourth when Tanner doubled with two outs and Nix brought her home with a single. In the fifth, Chambers led off with a double and reached third on a sacrifice fly by Lawn. She scored when Garrett grounded to short.

With Coach Stewart making wholesale substitutions, Union batted around in the sixth and dropped 7 runs on the guests to blow things wide open at 13-0.

Junior Channa Carroll reached on a leadoff walk, sophomore Megan Lockaby singled to right, and Tanner singled back up the middle to load the bases with nobody out.

Nix lined a base hit to center - scoring Carroll. Chambers followed with another single to center that scored Lockaby and Tanner.

Sophomore Maci Everett reached on a fielders choice, Garrett packed the bags again with an opposite field single, and Arrowood went the other way to score Sutton, who was running for Chambers.

With sophomore Logan Seabolt running for Garrett, Carroll came back to the plate and reached on an error, scoring Seabolt and Arrowood.

The Lady Panthers pounded out 13 hits and drew four walks in the contest to

go along with five stolen bases - two by Garrison and one each from Arrowood, Nix, and Poteete.

During the second game, a few Lady Panthers were able to make some history. Garrett's RBI gave her 73 for her career - the fifth most in team history. She passed Tori Dyer, who finished her career with 72 RBIs.

Chambers became just the third Lady Panther to record 90 RBIs for her career where she is now seven shy of second place Whitney Kelley (98). She also became the sixth Lady Panther to reach 25 career doubles and is two behind fifth place Courtney Busbee (27). From the circle she passed 350 strikeouts - joining April Harper (454 K's) and Angie Hughes (1,082 K's) as the only Union County pitchers to reach 350 strikeouts.

Finally, Tanner increased her career triples record, becoming the first player in team history to record 15 three-baggers.

Gray recognized



Lydia Gray

Lydia Gray recently had the opportunity to be a guest at the Community and Southern Bank Foundations 5th Annual Golf Tournament. After the tournament Steve Stone from Community and Southern Bank recognized Lydia as being one of their recent scholarship recipients this year. Lydia is a graduate of Union County High School and attends Truett McConnell College.

Blairsville Kiwanis Club's 25th Annual Golf Tournament

Blairsville Kiwanis Club's 25th Annual Golf Tournament presented by Union General Hospital has been rescheduled for Friday, October 16, 2015 due to a rain cancellation originally scheduled for September 25th at the Old Union Golf Course located off Hwy. 129 North in the Owen Glen Golf Community.

We still have opening for anyone interested in playing.

Please contact Jimmy Nichols at 706-745-2151 or Mary Colwell at 706-745-4502 if you would like to play and did not register at the original date of the tournament.

This is the Kiwanis Club's major fund raiser of the year to support the many projects we fund for the youth of Union County. So please come join us for a fun day of golf and support these great kids!