

Playoffs...from Page 1A

Last year the Tigers pulled away from the visiting Panthers during a 41-10 rout, but this season, things would be very different.

On paper, a battle of wills was expected - a matchup between an unstoppable force and an immovable object. The

Tigers were holding opposing offenses to 13 points-a-game. Meanwhile, the Panthers were sporting the Region's No. 1 scoring offense - putting up 42 points-per-game.

In the early going, the Union offense and Wilkes' defense made an immediate

impact. The Panthers opened the game with a 63-yard touchdown pass from junior quarterback Joseph Mancuso to senior receiver Jacob Rogers for a quick 7-0 lead.

Later in the quarter, the Tigers' defense tied things up at 7-7 when they scooped up a Union County fumble and returned it 11 yards for a score. After one half of action, the Panthers held a 21-14 lead. However, by the time the fourth quarter arrived, Union's offense was having little trouble moving the ball on the highly-touted Washington Wilkes defense.

Holding a 35-21 advantage after three, the Panthers had things under control but Washington Wilkes and its star quarterback DeAndre Harris refused to leave the mountains quietly.

With a little more than 9 minutes to play in the game, Harris scored on a keeper from the 3-yard line to make it a 35-28 game. Then at the 2:45 mark, Harris completed a 13-yard touchdown pass, but senior linebacker Brett Dietz came around the left side of the offensive line to block the Tigers' extra point attempt to keep the Panthers on top at 35-34.

Washington Wilkes had one last chance to take the lead but senior Luke Chatham forced a Tigers' fumble at the Union 11-yard line. Dietz recovered the fumble and preserve the Panthers' home field advantage in the State Tournament.

On Friday at 7:30 p.m. Union will host Model (8-2) at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium where the Panthers will

have a shot at making history, not once, but twice.

A win will be Union's first ever State Tournament win and first 10-win season in team history. The No. 3 seed Model Blue Devils will travel from Rome to Blairsville sporting an impressive 8-2 record with both losses coming inside of Region 7-AA. Region 7's No. 1 seed Darlington, and No. 2 seed Coosa are the only two teams to defeat Model. But luckily, Union and Model share a common opponent in Lumpkin County.

The Blue Devils hosted Lumpkin in the season opener where they recorded a 15-7 victory. The following week, Union pulled away from the Indians in a 28-7 win after going into halftime tied at 7-7.

The last time the Panthers were 9-1 and hosted the

first round was in 2001 when Union opened the season at 9-0 before falling at Greater Atlanta Christian 56-35 in what was essentially the 8-AA title game.

The following week Union hosted Morgan County during a heavy downpour. With a muddy field, Morgan took a 21-0 advantage but the Panthers rallied for 28-straight points. Morgan tied things up and eventually won on a last second field goal, 31-28 as Union finished the season with a 9-2 record.

During that 2001 season, Union recorded wins over Towns (48-16), Fanning (27-6), Rabun (30-7), White (13-7), Dawson (32-27), and Lumpkin (36-35 OT). The Panthers outlasted Apalachee (20-16), Banks (35-0), and East Hall (25-20).

Rescue...from Page 1A

outside. It was very cold, and we were concerned that this might not turn out the way we hoped it would.

"Lacey, our track dog, and her handler, Deputy Jeff McConnell, were out of state for training," Sgt. Deyton said. "Gilmer County offered us use of their track dog. Sgt. McClure from Gilmer and his Bloodhound Dixie got there as soon as they could. Everything was going good and then Sgt. McClure told us that he believed Dixie had lost the trail."

Dixie had lost the woman's scent and left rescuers worried about a worst-case scenario.

Sheriff's Sgt. Deyton and Sheriff's Sgt. Tyler Miller searched the Garrett Circle area to no avail.

Union County Search and Rescue had established a command at Antioch Church. The Georgia State Patrol helicopter had been requested to do an infrared body heat search of the grounds.

"During this whole ordeal, we held off of beating the bushes, so as not to con-

fuse the track dog with all of our scents," Sgt. Deyton said. "Dixie is scent-specific trained, by that I mean she can get a whiff of the woman's clothing that she had recently worn, and pick up that specific scent."

Once rescuers determined that Dixie had lost the woman's trail, Union County Sheriff's Lt. Darren Jones, the weekend shift road commander, made contact with the Georgia State Patrol helicopter to ask for assistance to do an infrared heat search of the grounds.

"The helicopter was en route," Sgt. Deyton said. "While we were waiting on the helicopter, Sgt. Miller and myself began to back track through the different streets on Garrett Circle."

The helicopter was en route when deputies Deyton and Miller made a discovery.

"We had people looking all over for her," Sgt. Deyton said. "We had patrol cars patrolling all the roads. We had all units checking all the highways, Antioch Church,

the cemetery. From the roadway, we were checking everything.

"Sgt. Miller and I started checking all the driveways," Sgt. Deyton said. "We made it back a couple of driveways above her residence. It was a long driveway, it had leaves all over it, and when you first look at it, you think that it doesn't go anywhere.

"When we got down there, you could see a car parked in the driveway," Sgt. Deyton said. "There was someone slumped against the car. I thought she was deceased the way her body was positioned. We rushed down to her, notified the search party that we had located her and made the call for the med unit. We got down there and I asked her if she was okay. She looked up and said 'yes, I'm just cold.' Sgt. Miller took his sweatshirt off and we covered her up, and got her to the patrol car and put her in the front seat. We had the heat wide open, she just leaned back in the seat and just kept saying 'thank you.'"

Miller and Deyton got the woman, who was dressed in a thin blouse and Capri pants and walking shoes, to the med unit, where she was taken to Union General Hospital, and later admitted, Sgt. Deyton said.

"The folks at the hospital expect her to make a recovery," Sgt. Deyton said. "I know this, if we had not found her when we did, she wouldn't have survived. We still don't know how long she was outside; all we knew is that it could have been from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. and it was very, very cold.

"It was something how everyone pulled together and worked together to bring this to a successful resolve," Sgt. Deyton said. "Everyone out there searching was determined that we were going to find her.

"This one turned out good," Sgt. Deyton said. "Most incidents like this don't turn out as successful as this one did. We just thank the Good Lord that we were in the right place at the right time."

Goodies...from Page 1A

need in Union County too," Shields said. "I started doing some research and contacted Katy Jones, the Family Connection Coordinator at the (Union County) school. We discovered there was no pro-

gram in Union County but there was definitely a need."

Following its inception at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year, and with the help of the Gainesville Food Bank, and Blairsville's Ingles, and Walmart, the program quickly turned into a success. The first weekend, there were eight bags sent home on Friday. That number continued to grow each week and as of now, the program is filling around 180 bags of food each week for students who qualify.

For more details about Goodies From the Heart, visit the Union County Family Connection website.

If you would like to refer a child for this program, contact his or her teacher.

Cold...

continued from Page 1A

gate and sign entrance, and fencing will have to be done with private funds.

"We are hoping that some of the family members who have relatives with graves in the cemetery will help financially, but we also hope that some of the public in general will feel led to donate to the protection and beautification of this historic cemetery," Commissioner Paris said.

The Union County Historical Society has set up a fund and will accept donations for the historic cemetery. Checks or cash can be taken to the Society at the Historic Courthouse in Blairsville, or you can mail in a donation to the: Union County Historical Society, P.O. Box 35, Blairsville, GA 30514.

"Your donations are tax deductible and will be very much appreciated," Commissioner Paris said.

Exact figures aren't available right now related to the amount of funds necessary to complete the project, but an estimated guess figures it will take \$20,000 to \$30,000 to complete the project, Commissioner Paris said.

Currently, the Sons of the Confederate Veterans has donated \$1,000, an anonymous donation of \$1,000, additional anonymous donations bring the total to around \$3,000, Commissioner Paris said.

To find out if the Saturday workday at the historic Old Blairsville Cemetery is still a go, call (706) 439-6000.

