

Sports

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Panthers win two of three, place third at BOTS Tourney

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HIWASSEE -- Union County (7-5, 1-2) won two games at last week's Battle of the States Christmas Tournament to take home third place.

The Panthers opened with a blowout victory over Armuchee (Rome) and finished off the tourney with another double-digit win over Polk County, TN.

Unfortunately, the second round saw the Panthers slip up against a Walhalla, SC squad that already owns two wins over Union's next opponent: Rabun County.

The Panthers have the week off before diving head-first into region play with a 7 p.m. showdown at Rabun County on Friday and a home contest with Putnam County at 3 p.m. Saturday.

"[During this tournament] we talked about limiting our stretches where we don't take care of the ball," Union County head coach Casey Jones said after the win on day three. "When we get into region we're going to have to do a better job taking care of the basketball. Those stretches don't hurt as much in a 20-point game but if you're in a five or 10-point game, you can't get away with it."

Panthers 61, Polk County, TN 51 - When Coach Jones talked about "limiting" sloppy play, his Panther squad was fresh off a 10-point win over Polk County that could have very easily been a 30-point victory.

Instead, the Wildcats were a bucket or two away from taking the Panthers down to the wire.

The first 16 points of the contest belonged to Union County -- with Sawyer Drake accounting for six of those 16 -- as Polk didn't crack the scoring column until the 2:11 mark of the opening frame.

Trailing 17-2 with 96 seconds left in the first, the Wildcats would score five unanswered for a 17-7 score.

With Union leading 19-10 at the 5-minute mark of the first half, a Pierson Allison steal resulted in an and-one. Moments later, Allison returned to the line, hitting one, to give his team a 23-10 advantage.

Still leading by double-digits at 25-14, Allison knocked down a triple from the wing to double up Polk at 28-14. Senior Christian Robertson scored down low while Cayden Rich followed with two free throws and a tip in for the largest lead of the half at 34-16.

Once again, Polk would close the half strong and put five-straight on the board to trim an 18-point deficit to 13 heading to the break.

Union opened the third with six unanswered for a 40-21 lead. They would extend the margin to 49-27 with a 3-point play from Drake at the 2:16 mark of the third.

The Panthers maintained the 20-point lead until the final 70 seconds of the quarter when the never-say-die Wildcats used a 7-0 run to make it a 49-34 game to



Union County placed third at the 25th Annual Battle of the States Christmas Tournament following two wins in three days. Photos by Todd Forrest



Sawyer Drake - All Tournament

three, the Panthers scored to start the fourth before coasting home to a 67-55 victory.

Allison finished with 21 points, 6 steals, 5 rebounds and 3 assists. Drake had 16 points, 6 steals, 5 rebounds, a blocked shot and an assist.

Day added 9 points, 3 boards and 2 assists; Hemphill went for 8 points and 8 rebounds; Rich chipped in 7 points and 3 assists while Waller had 5 points and 7 boards.

Robertson finished with 3 points and 2 boards; Jonah Green recorded a steal.

Panthers 57, Walhalla, SC 63 - Leading 36-30 in the third, Union County was unable to hold on against the Razorbacks on day two of the BOTS.

Down six, Walhalla bounced back to even the score at 42-42 as the third quarter expired with Allison beating the buzzer on a coast-to-coast layup, halting a 12-2 run by the Razorbacks.

The Panthers' final lead of the day came on a Waller deuce at the 6:18 mark, giving Union a 44-43 advantage.

Never able to regain the lead again, the Panthers tied things up at 46-46 on a Drake free throw and at 48-all on a Waller lay-in.

Unfortunately, a Razorback three would open up a lead they would never relinquish. Union answered with a Hemphill jumper to pull within a point but four-straight Walhalla free throws extended the lead to 55-50.

Waller made it a one-possession game with a basket at the 2:12 mark before the Razorbacks pulled away 59-52 with two free throws and a putback.

Allison scored five points over the final 40 seconds but the Panthers would get no closer than five points down.

Allison also score six of Union's 13 first quarter points as his team lead 13-10 after one.

Nelson would carry the load in the second with 7 points on two deuces and one three, giving him 10 total points at the half. Day would add 5 points in the second, giving him seven going into halftime.

Allison would end up leading the way when it was all said and done -- scoring 13 points on a perfect 7-for-7 at the line. He would also record 4 steals, 3 rebounds and 2 assists.

Drake had 11 points along with a team-high 7 rebounds and 3 assists. Nelson and Day would finish with 10 and 7 points, respectively. Waller added 6 points and 5 boards, Rich scored 6 points with 2 rebounds while Hemphill ended up with 4 points and 4 rebounds.

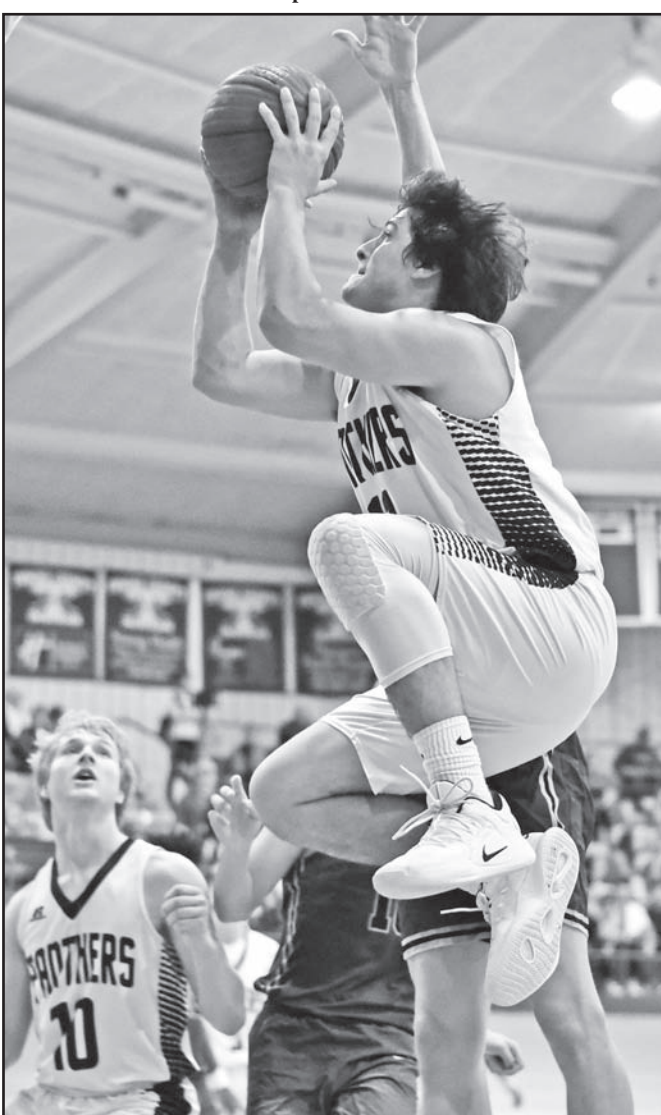
Union County would shoot 53-percent from the floor to Walhalla's 36-percent but the difference was on the glass as the Razorbacks grabbed 14 offensive boards to Union's three.



Christian Robertson battles for position vs Polk. Photo/Todd Forrest



Colton Day and Britt Waller vs Armuchee. Photo/Todd Forrest



Cayden Rich gets takes flight during a drive to the hoop in the second half vs Walhalla, SC at the BOTS. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Britt Waller scores two of his 5 first half points vs Polk County, TN on the third and final day of the BOTS. Photo/Todd Forrest

begin the fourth. Jared Nelson fouled out 55 seconds into the fourth and Polk County went on to score the first 5 points of the quarter -- extending their run to 12-0 -- pulling within 10 at 49-39.

After Drake pushed the

advantage to 50-39 with a free throw at 6:17, the Wildcats finally trimmed the deficit to nine at the 4:30 mark but that's as close as they would get after missing a handful of gimmies from close range.

Colton Day, Kanon Hemphill and Drake all helped keep Polk at bay until Allison sank two free throws for a 60-48 lead with 1:01 to play.

Drake added on a late free throw to finish with a team-high 19 points. Allison poured in 16 points -- 10 in the first half.

Hemphill added 9 points, Rich scored six, Waller

had five, Day finished with four and Robertson chipped in two.

Panthers 67, Armuchee 55 - Union opened the tournament by dismantling Armuchee in a match-up that wasn't nearly as close as the final score would indicate.

The Panthers led by as many as 25 points in the fourth quarter before Coach Jones called off the dogs.

Union County would trail 13-5 early until a Drake basket sparked a 17-0 run that the Indians would never recover from.

Following an Armuchee three to halt the Panther run,

Day responded with a trey of his own to ignite another Union County run.

This time, a 15-3 onslaught made it a 37-19 game at the 2-minute mark of the second. The Indians, however, still had some fight left in them as they closed the half on a 10-2 run to make it a 39-29 game at the break.

A Rich lay-up and a Drake slam got the third quarter underway with a bang as Union scored the first 14 points of the second half to take a 53-29 lead when Drake capped off the outburst with a triple at the 5-minute mark.

Leading 61-38 after



Pierson Allison with a reverse layup against Polk Co. Photo/Todd Forrest

2019 Baseball and Softball registration opens at the Union County Recreation Department January 7th - February 15th for ages 3-14. Fee: \$55

3-4 Coed Start Smart-parent participation is required.	
5-6 Coed T-ball	11-12 Softball
7-8 Girls Machine Pitch	11-12 Baseball
7-8 Boys Machine Pitch	13-14 Softball
9-10 Softball	13-14 Baseball
9-10 Baseball	

Daddy Daughter Dance

When: Saturday, February 9, 2019 6 PM - 9 PM
Cost: \$50 per couple
\$20 for each additional daughter
Tickets are limited and must be purchased in advance.
Tickets are available only at the Union County Recreation Office located at 310 Welborn Street.
Dinner and limo rides are included.
Pictures are an additional fee.
Please call 706-439-6074 with any questions.