

Sports

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Panthers rout Rabun Gap in scrimmage; season opens Friday at Gilmer

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nghanews.com

The Union County scrimmage contest went pretty much as expected last Thursday. The Panthers offense had its way with the Rabun Gap defense while the Union defense kept a one-dimensional Eagles offense off the scoreboard in a 43-0 victory.

The Panthers defense gave up just three plays of more than 10 yards while forcing four take-aways – one coming on special teams. At the end of the day, Rabun Gap finished with only 35 yards of offense, thanks in large part to a few errant snaps that resulted in losses of 18, 17, and 14 yards.

On the other side of the ball, senior quarterback Cole Wright looked every bit the offensive MVP of Region 7-AAA despite seeing limited action. After his fourth series at the helm of the offense, Wright was replaced by sophomore Pierson Allison.

While Wright was taking the snaps, the Panthers scored three touchdowns and one field goal during his four possessions, en route to a 23-0 lead with 7:22 to play in the first half.

“I thought the offensive line showed a lot of improvement from the spring game,” Union County Head Coach Brian Allison said. “Right now it’s a battle between seven or eight guys for those five spots and we’re looking to see who is going to step up.”

On the game’s opening possession, Union went 80 yards on 10 plays, capped off by a 34-yard touchdown scramble that ended with Wright diving across the goal line with a defender draped across his shoulders.

The score was actually the second of the series for Wright.

Three plays earlier on the 38-yard line, he rolled left and threw back across his body to sophomore Sawyer Drake, who shook a defensive back and tip-toed the near sideline for six points. Unfortunately, a piece of yellow laundry lying in the backfield negated the play for holding.

Facing a 1st-and-20, Wright hit Logan Dyer for a gain of six, then found Drake for 10 more. On third down, Wright rolled left once again, but this time he took off, weaving his way through traffic until an Eagle defender grabbed him by the shoulders at the 10, but was unable to drag him down before Wright reached his outstretched arm -- and the football -- across the goal line.

On the other hand, it was obvious that the Rabun Gap offense wanted to establish the running game early on, but Union continuously stuffed the rushing attack on first down – forcing the Eagles into passing situations where they weren’t as comfortable.

On the Panthers’ first defensive series of the game, they forced back-to-back incompletions after a 1-yard run but were penalized for pass interference, awarding Rabun Gap a fresh set of downs. Three plays later, they moved the chains once more but the Union defense dropped the Eagles for a loss on their next third down situation, bringing up a punt.

With a 4th-and-5 at mid-field, the snap sailed high over the punter’s head before he was able to corral the loose ball at his own 30-yard line, awarding Wright and the offense a short field.

Just 30 yards from pay dirt, it didn’t take Union long to put six more on the board. Dyer turned a short completion into a 20-yard pickup and a 1st-and-goal. On 2nd-and-goal, Wright and senior Austin Pattee hooked up on a 10-yard scoring strike – extending the lead to 14-0.

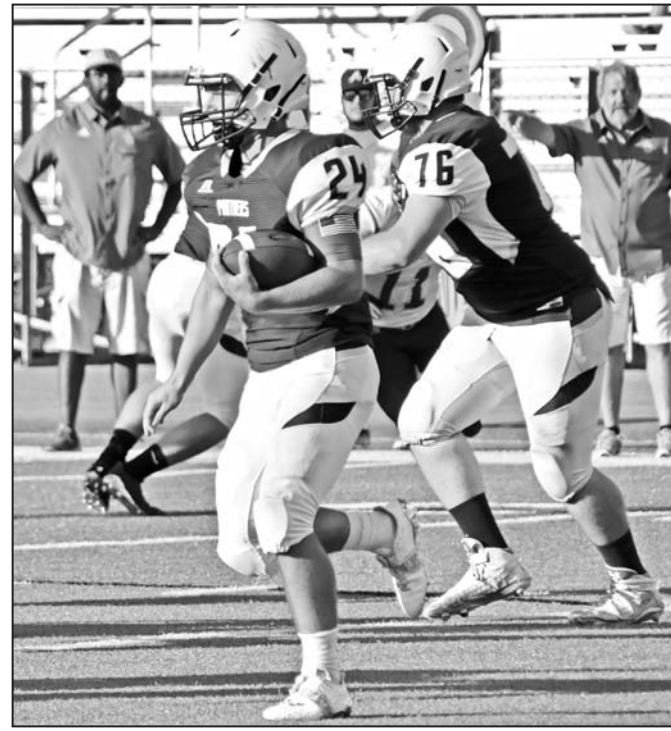
A three-and-out by the defense gave the ball back to the Union on its own 43 and Wright immediately went to work, finding Drake for 12 yards and Dyer for 11 more. As the second quarter got underway, Union was looking at 3rd-and-10 but Wright and Kanon Hemphill connected for 13 yards and a first down.

An incompletion followed by two short Chad Buzzard runs brought Brian Smith onto the field for a 28-yard field goal. The kick spent the uprights and the lead was 17-0, early in the second.

Union County almost added two more points when Jackson Colwell brought down



Cole Wright extends the ball across the goal line for the first score of the game. Photo/Todd Forrest



Chad Buzzard ran for a game-high 72 yards and 2 TDs. Photo/Todd Forrest



Brian Smith (36) drills a 28-yard field goal. Photo/Todd Forrest



Rabun Gap's QB is introduced to Matthew Beise (53) and Kyle Williams (40). Photo/Todd Forrest

the Eagles quarterback in the end zone but forward progress brought the ball out to the one. Rabun Gap eventually punted following its second straight three-and-out and once again, the Panthers set up shop with excellent field position.

From the 32, Buzzard carried for 13, but on the very next play, Union was flagged for holding, pushing the offense back to the 29. The additional 10 yards didn’t make a difference to Buzzard as he found a crease on the left side of the O-line, then bounced outside and took it to the house from 29 yards away.

The PAT was unsuccessful but with 7:22 remaining in the half, it was 23-0.

That would be the final play of the day for Wright, who finished 9-of-13 with 98 yards and one score through the air. After the opening series where he carried twice for 43 yards and a score, Wright played it safe, carrying just once more for a loss of 2 yards.

Allison took over for Wright at the Rabun Gap 43-yard line on the heels of another three-and-out from the defense.

The sophomore backup found Hemphill for five then kept it himself for five more and a first down. Buzzard picked up six with his legs and Allison scrambled for 12 more yards before getting sacked and losing four. On 2nd-and-15 from the 25, Allison raced down the far sideline and carried a defender into the end zone for a 30-0 lead.

Things only got worse for Rabun Gap when Sean Dobbins picked off a pass on the ensuing possession. Fortunately for them, the Union offense sputtered and was forced to punt for the first time all day.

But just when the Eagles saw a glimmer of hope, they coughed up the football on the punt return and Cayden Rich recovered the fumble at midfield.

“I thought the defense did some good things, but early on they did a very poor job of tackling,” Coach Allison said. “But as the scrimmage went on we got better and better with it.”

With 2:19 before halftime, Hemphill snagged a 13-yard completion, Buzzard picked up three, and a Kyle Morlock reception was good for 15.

From the 20, Union needed just two more plays to find the end zone and take a 37-0 lead into the locker room: A 9-yard keeper by Allison and an 11-yard run from Buzzard – his second score of the day.

Buzzard took a well deserved break during the second half after leading the team in rushing with 72 yards and two

scores on nine carries.

Rabun Gap opened the second half with a 12-yard completion on third down but Dobbins picked off his second pass of the game when the Eagles became greedy and attempted a deep ball down the sideline.

From its own 27, Union drove all the way to the Rabun Gap 1-yard line but three consecutive plays resulting in negative yardage handed the ball back to the visitors. But early in the drive, Allison had the offense on the move. A 19-yard completion to Riley Barrett and an 18-yard pass to Morlock was followed by an 18-yard gain on a handoff to sophomore running back Sloan Sutton.

A defensive holding penalty gave Union the ball inside the 10 until a sack pushed them back to the 20. A screen pass to Morlock went for 12 yards and another give to Sutton was good for 6 yards – moving the Panthers inside the one. That’s as close as Union would get, however, as the offense went backwards over the next three plays.

Meanwhile, the Eagles’ offense didn’t fare any better as the defense forced another three-and-out and the fourth quarter opened with freshman Kaston Hemphill leading the offense onto the field at the 45-yard line.

A give to Dylan Roberts went for 14 yards but consecutive incompletions and a chop block penalty put Union in a third-and-25. Kaston Hemphill found Josh Orr for a 17-yard gain to bring up a 4th-and-6 where a sack forced a turnover on downs.

Union County sophomore Thomas Allison recorded a sack on third down, giving the freshman offense another possession, but the Panthers were stopped short on a 4th-and-9 from the 33.

On Rabun Gap’s first play of the ensuing series, Thomas Allison pounced on a fumble, giving the ball back to Union at the 16-yard line with 46 seconds left.

A no-gain on first down

brought up a 2nd-and-10 for the final play of the game. With the clock winding down, Kaston Hemphill was flushed out of the pocket and rolled right, heaving a pass into the end zone, where an open Orr went up high to pull down the touchdown grab and give the Panthers a 43-0 victory.

“With the game the way it is today, and with as many plays as we’re playing in a game now, you’ve got to have depth,” Allison said. “That’s what we were working on in the second half. Even in the second quarter we were trying to get some guys in.”

“I liked our effort and intensity (in the second half). I thought we did some good things in the screen (pass) game and I thought it was an overall positive experience.”

Looking ahead: Up next is Gilmer, who’s coming off a 42-0 blowout loss at the hands of rival Fannin County.

Regardless of the lopsided defeat to Fannin, Coach Allison acknowledges that Gilmer’s unorthodox offense could give his defense fits.

Earlier, while discussing depth, Allison brought up how quickly teams are playing nowadays, but Gilmer is the exception. The Bobcats use a three running back offense and will try to shorten the game by keeping the Panthers offense off the field with a ground-and-pound style of play, reminiscent of the University of Oklahoma’s Wishbone offense of the 1970s and 80s.

“The biggest thing about Gilmer is their offense,” Allison said. “They are a three back offense and that’s not something we see on a daily basis. So not only will we be preparing for (Gilmer) we’ll be preparing for any teams in our region that might run a similar offense.”

For more on Union County football and a further preview of Gilmer County, visit the North Georgia News Sports blog at www.ngnsports.wordpress.com.

The site will be updated throughout the week with the latest Union County sports news.

Basketball Registration at the Union County Recreation Department

Begins August 21st

Age Group
5/6 yrs old
7/8 yrs old
9/10 yrs old
11/12 yrs old



Registration Ends
September 29th
September 29th
October 27th
October 27th

**Registration fee is \$50.00 and open to both boys and girls. **

Registration can be completed online at unioncounty.gov.com or at the Recreation Office located at 310 Wellborn Street. If you need any additional information, please call 706-439-6074.

For further UCHS sports updates, scores, or if you would like notifications when new blog posts are added, follow Todd Forrest (@hotrodtodd25) on Twitter.

Union County vs Rabun Gap scrimmage stats:

Passing: Wright 9-for-13, 98 yards, 1 TD; Allison 7-for-8, 93 yards; Kas. Hemphill 2-for-6, 43 yards, 1 TD.

Rushing: Buzzard 9 carries, 72 yards, 2 TDs; Allison 3

carries, 46 yards, 1 TD; Wright 3 carries, 41 yards, 1 TD; Sutton 2 carries, 25 yards; Kas. Hemphill 2 carries, 20 yards; Roberts 3 carries, 15 yards.

Receiving: Dyer 5 receptions, 54 yards; Morlock 3 rec, 45 yards; Kan. Hemphill 4 rec, 41 yards; Orr 2 rec, 33 yards, 1 TD; Drake 2 rec, 22 yards; Barrett 1 rec, 19 yards; Pattee 1 rec, 10 yards, 1 TD.

2017 VARSITY FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

August 17	H	Rabun Gap (Scrimmage)	7:00
August 25	A	Gilmer County	7:30
September 1	A	Hayesville, NC	7:30
September 8	H	Andrews, NC	7:30
September 15	H	Banks County	7:30
September 22	H	Greater Atlanta Christian	7:30
September 29	A	East Hall	7:30
October 6	H	Dawson County	7:30
October 13	A	North Hall	7:30
October 20		OPEN	
October 27	H	Fannin County	7:30
November 3	A	Lumpkin County	7:30

Union County Recreation Senior Autumn WALK-It-OUT Program

2017 Senior Walking Program
Ages: 55 and over

Fall is coming soon and UCRD is continuing with our walking program! We have two different walking programs designed to fit your individual pace. Our first group will walk at a high intensity level and our second group will be a low intensity level. The Program Director of Union County Parks and Recreation will be leading a free walking session two times a week for 6 weeks in session 2. This is a great time to socialize and exercise with a fun group. We will meet at Meeks Park Walking Trail and walk it out for 60 minutes. (You did not need to be a part of session one in order to participate in the Fall session.)

**Session Two Registration begins on August 7 and ends August 31 at the Recreation Office (310 Wellborn St.) Registration must be done in person due to cap on participants per session! If you have any questions, please call our office at (706) 439-6074.



Trout stocking sites week of August 14-18, 2017

Fannin: Rock Creek, Toccoa River and Toccoa River Tailwaters (below Lake Blue Ridge Dam)

Union: Cooper Creek and Toccoa River

Note: Information is subject to change. Please call the hatchery at 706-838-4723 for questions. Stay up-to-date with stocking and events through Facebook www.facebook.com/chattahoocheeforestnfh. The hatchery also provides trout for the state. Please contact Georgia DNR for information on sites stocked by the state.

