

Sports

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Football: Panthers' comeback bid falls short at Providence

Dockrey's record-setting 14-reception night cut short by injury

By Todd Forrest
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Lilburn - Union County (5-2, 1-1) convened an inspired third quarter with 21 unanswered points, but it wasn't enough to overcome a 41-14 deficit during Friday's 55-35 loss at Providence Christian (6-1, 1-1).

"We made a lot of mistakes offensively and we played about as bad as you can play defensively during the first half," Union County head coach Michael Perry said. "At half-time, I told the guys, 'We're going to reveal what kind of team we really are in the second half; you can either quit or you can go out there and show what you're made of.'"

After tying the game at 7-7 on another rainy night in Region 8-AA, the Panthers yielded 28 straight as Providence built a 35-7 second-quarter advantage. Union County momentarily moved within 35-14 until a Storm touchdown bumped the halftime margin to 41-14.

For the second time in six games, the Panthers gave up a career-high rushing performance courtesy of Providence senior running back Quinton Slaughter, who went for 348 yards and two scores on the ground.

"We knew [Slaughter] was good, but we also knew they were primarily a passing team," Perry said. "But my hat's off to him. He's a good player."

The backbreaker came via Slaughter in the fourth after a shorthanded Union County closed the gap to 41-35 following Tyler Grasty's 99-yard touchdown reception from Caiden Tanner.

With the Storm pinned inside their own 20 and momentum on the visitor's sideline, Slaughter gashed the defense 82 yards up the middle on a score that essentially put Union County away.

The Panthers were on the verge of answering early in the fourth until two costly penalties on one play derailed the ensuing series. The drive stalled after Cade Dockrey snagged a third-and-8 pass over the middle for 4 yards. For his effort, he took a vicious, unflagged helmet-to-helmet hit that knocked the sophomore receiver from the



Sophomore receiver Cade Dockrey set a school-record with 14 catches at Providence despite missing most of the fourth quarter. Photo/Todd Forrest

leaguered defense sparked the turnaround when senior David Heredia scooped up a backward lateral at the Panthers' 20 and returned the fumble 13 yards.

Four plays later, Tanner slipped out of scramble in the backfield and scrambled for 13 on fourth-and-4 at 39, then a catch-and-run by Dockrey moved the chains again.

Rader capped off the drive with a 20-yard touchdown run on third and 9, blasting his way up the gut to move Union within 41-21.

Another Providence fumble handed possession back to the Panthers in plus territory, where Rader went back to work after a first-down throw to Grasty picked up 13.

Rader's second down run drew a late hit out of bounds, awarding Union a first down at the 14. The Panthers kept feeding the hot hand, and Rader treated the Purple and Gold faithful to a moment that may go down as the senior's most memorable run.

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leaguered defense sparked the turnaround when senior David Heredia scooped up a backward lateral at the Panthers' 20 and returned the fumble 13 yards.

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But Rader broke free, keeping his legs churning on the wet turf, and taking on two more defenders before turning the corner. As he found the edge, Rader slipped two tackles near the sideline and ran through a helpless defensive back at the one before diving across the goal line.

"That's probably the best run I've ever seen by a high school running back," Perry said. "I can't say enough about him. He definitely needs to play college football. He's just a football player. And a very good one."

In a 41-28 contest, the defense delivered one more time, depriving Providence of 6 points on a fourth-and-goal QB sneak from inside the 1-yard line. Two plays later, the Storm bit on a play-fake to Rader and Tanner tossed a quick jump pass to Grasty over the middle with nothing but turf in the way of his place in the record books for equaling the sport's longest play from scrimmage.

Grasty sprinted all the way inside the Providence 20, where the senior zigged and zagged his way across the goal line to escape one final defender and move Union within a score at 41-35.

"My brother [assistant coach Tyler Perry] called that play," Michael Perry said. "He saw something in how Providence was lined up and we knew we'd get a completion. We just didn't think it'd be for 99 yards. That was definitely one of the most exciting plays I've ever seen."

Providence started the scoring with a 9-play, 77-yard drive following a Union County three-and-out. The Panthers returned fire when sophomore Tyler Parker hauled in his first varsity touchdown pass from 47 yards out.

The Storm need only six plays to go 74 yards and mount a 14-7 edge. On the ensuing Union series, a fumble set up senior Ben Classen's 24-yard touchdown strike.

Providence continued piling on at 28-7 with an 80-yard touchdown hookup late in the first. Then a 6-play, 89-yard scoring drive made it 35-7 during the second quarter.

The Panthers battled back as Connor Schuknecht found paydirt from 2 yards out to cap the 9-play series.

The Storm quickly expanded its lead to 41-14 courtesy of a 6-play, 77-yard scoring

drive. To make matters worse for Union County, two lengthy Rader kickoff returns were negated by penalties during the opening half - taking a touchdown off the board on the first return.

Tanner ended the day 24 for 32 with 328 yards passing and 2 TDs, adding 40 yards on the ground. In the absence of the team's leading receiver, Jensen Goble, Dockrey and Grasty produced a pair of breakout performances.

Along with Dockrey's school-record outing, Grasty finished with a career-best 140 yards receiving on 7 receptions. As for Dockrey, the sophomore entered the game with only 10 career catches before getting thrust into a more significant role without Goble. Dockrey's 14 catches break the UCHS record of 13, previously shared by the aforementioned Goble (2023 at West Hall) and Blake Gowder (2008 at Fannin).

Parker finished with 2 catches for 54 yards at Providence and McBride added one reception for 29. Rader compiled 62 yards and 2 touchdowns on the ground.

Schuknecht rushed five times for 30 yards and a score. No defensive stats were available at deadline.

Up next: Union County travels to East Jackson (6-1, 1-1) at 7:30 p.m. on Friday with a chance to clinch a playoff spot. The Eagles, who defeated Banks County 41-0, are coming off a bye week following a 55-21 loss at Fellowship Christian.

"East Jackson's quarterback is very much improved over last year - he reminds me a lot of [Texas A&M 2012 Heisman Trophy winner] Johnny Manziel," Perry said. "He's very good at keeping the play alive and giving his receivers time to get open. Overall, they are very athletic on both sides of the ball."

Injury update: According to Coach Perry, senior tackle Mayo Collins-Spiva is doubtful for Friday and Dockrey is questionable. Senior defensive end Jonah Kluth is out.

Senior receiver Zach Taylor could return Friday depending on this week's practice performance.

Perry added there's a possibility Goble returns this week but listed his status as doubtful.



Kooper Ashcraft (4) and the defense celebrate a 4th-and-goal stop in the third quarter. Photo/Todd Forrest



Braylen Rader scored two touchdowns and had another called back on a kickoff return. Photo/Todd Forrest

Softball: Lady Panthers sink Providence 5-2, enter State Tournament as No. 2 seed

By Todd Forrest
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Union County finishes the season as the No. 2 seed from 8-AA and will travel to Rockmart this week for the Class AA Super Regionals following last week's 5-2 win at Providence Christian.

During Tuesday's win at Providence, freshman Izzy Anthros fanned 10 and allowed 3 hits over 6 1/3 innings. Junior Lily Helton went 3 for 3 with an RBI, and senior Georgia Patton doubled and scored three times during a 2-for-4 game.

The Lady Panthers, who enter the postseason on a five-game winning streak, extended their lead to 5-1 in the fifth when Anthros doubled home Patton.

The Storm's two-out single made it 5-2 in the sixth.

Union County got two in the first when Gladding doubled home Patton, then advanced to third on an error. Later, courtesy-runner Zaidie Diaz came around on Sloane Dyer's groundout.

Providence used a sacrifice fly to cut the lead in half during the bottom of the first.

Patton doubled and



Georgia Patton scored three times at Providence. Photo/Todd Forrest scored in the third, and Helton's two-out single brought in Diaz during the third frame.

Anthros finished 1 for 2 with a walk and an RBI; Gladding went 1 for 4 with an RBI; Patton added two stolen bases.

Ayla Jamison tossed 2/3 of an inning, allowing a run.

Union County will face Landmark Christian in the

first round of Super Regionals on Wednesday at 3 p.m. in Rockmart.

Coretta Scott King and Rockmart meet at 1 p.m. The two winners will meet at 7 p.m. The losers will meet at 5 p.m.

The championship game is at 5 p.m. on Thursday with the if necessary game at 7 p.m.

Volleyball: Panthers eliminated at East Jackson; 8-AA All-Region teams announced

By Todd Forrest
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Nicholson - Union County's season wrapped up in the Region 8-AA tournament with a 2-0 loss (25-12, 25-12) at East Jackson.

After splitting its two regular season matches vs. the Eagles, Union County entered the 8-AA tournament as the No. 6 seed, which resulted in a trip to third-seeded East Jackson.

The Panthers featured four players on the 2023 All-Region team, headlined by junior Katelyn Brown's first-team nod. Joining Brown are juniors Lily Brookshire, Charlei Robinson and sophomore Reese Jones.

Brown, an outside hitter/setter, finished the year with 135 kills, 43 aces, 12 blocks and 271 digs.

At outside hitter, Brookshire logged 130 kills, 32 aces, 3 blocks and 211 digs to earn a second-team selection. Robinson (right-side hitter and defensive specialist) picked up an honorable mention nod with 59 kills, 31 aces, 8 blocks and 239 digs.

Jones (right-side hitter/setter) also earned an honorable mention with 36 aces, 3 blocks, 169 digs and 180 assists.



L-R: Junior Katelyn Brown (first team 8-AA), UCHS head coach Megan Brown and junior Lily Brookshire (second team 8-AA).

UCRD gearing up for youth basketball

By Todd Forrest
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During October, the Union County Recreation Department is hosting a youth basketball camp for registered players between the ages of 5-8 under the tutelage of former Union County basketball standout Jack Lance Jr.

The one-hour camp is held every Tuesday and Thursday, except for this week's fall

break, beginning at 5:30 p.m. for 5-6-year-olds at the Union County Sports Center. The 7-8-year-olds take the floor at 6:30 p.m.

"The idea is to get them in here during the month of October and let them start working on fundamentals [ahead of the recreation department's season]," said Lance, a 1998 Union County graduate. "We want them to learn, but we also want them to have fun.

Through the first half

of October, the 5-6 year olds have averaged over 60 kids per day. Meanwhile, the older group has averaged close to 70 participants.

"I want to thank the recreation department and Susan Stalcup for taking the lead and the initiative to help see this through, along with Scotty Thompson," Lance added. "And we need to thank all the coaches who are volunteering their time to help do this."



Jack Lance (left) teaches youngsters correct shooting-form at the Union County Rec Center on Thursday, October 12. Photo/Todd Forrest



Katie Mashburn conducts passing drills on Thursday evening at the Rec Center. Photo/Todd Forrest

Local Racing Report: Tri-County

By Blake Lynch
Racing Reporter
North Georgia News

The last scheduled race of the season at Tri County ended with the Tar Heel 50 and FloRacing.

The winner of the Super late model took home \$23,023. Ray Cook would like to thank everyone that came to the track this season. This includes driv-

ers, fans and staff.

Super Late Model: Mark Rarchards Racing Inc with Hudson O'Neal driving took the win. Second was Bobby Pierce Racing LLC driven by Bobby Pierce. Third was Todd Burns Racing driven by Ricky Thornton Jr. Fourth went to Lance Landers Motorsport LLC driven by Blairsville's own Jonathan Davenport. Fifth was Dennis Erb Jr.

FWD: No. 32 Jim Exum picked up the win. No. 721 Jeremy Woody was second. No. 28 Shannon Jones was third. No. 48 Justin Queen was fourth. No. X Tank Ingram placed fourth.

602 Crate: No. 117 Dylan Beaver picked up the win. No. 116 Jonathan Cope placed second. No. 56 Colton Berrong took third. No. 44 Bobby Elkins was fourth. No. 73 CB McKinnon was fifth.

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Following surgery, Jason Deal returned to the track at an earlier race with a substitute driver.

UCRD Football: Panthers win three at Lumpkin Co.; 3rd grade ends in 0-0 tie

Dahlonega - Union County youth football went 3-2-1 at Lumpkin County on Saturday, Oct. 14, with its three wins coming by a combined score of 112-13.

The 1st graders kicked things off with a 38-0 victory followed by another 38-0 win

by the 5th-grade Panthers. The 6th graders pulled away 36-13 after falling into an early 7-0 hole.

The 3rd-grade game ended in a 0-0 after two overtimes failed to produce a score.

The 2nd grade and 4th grade each suffered losses to

the Indians.

The postseason picture will come into focus following this Saturday's visit to White County. Union County will host Fannin County on Saturday, Oct 28.

Playoffs get underway on Nov. 4.



J.P. Waggoner is off to the races during the 1st grade's 38-0 win at Lumpkin County. Photo/Todd Forrest



Hunter Richards (L) and Alexander Grey (R) celebrate Richards' 55-yard pick-6 during the first half of the 5th grade's 38-0 win. Photo/Todd Forrest



Abel Bass (3) breaks loose down the sideline during Union's 6th-grade victory. Photo/Todd Forrest