

Sports

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Class AAA First Round: Cedar Grove too much for Panthers

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Panthersville – Buck Godfrey stadium and the city of Panthersville proved unkind to the Union County Panthers on Saturday as 6th ranked Cedar Grove used 56-unanswered points to pull away in a 63-17 victory in the first round of the Class AAA State Tournament.

A 55-yard punt return for a score gave the Saints an early 7-0 lead but Union County responded by driving inside the Cedar Grove 5-yard line where a 22-yard Brian Smith field goal put the Panthers on the board with 5:46 to play in the first quarter.

The Panthers did have some success throwing the football despite facing a secondary that features a pair of defensive backs who have committed to North Carolina and Arkansas, respectively.

Junior quarterback Cole Wright finished with 189 yards through the air and one score while rushing for 70 yards and a score. The touchdown pass was a 30-yard strike to sophomore Kanon Hemphill, late in the fourth quarter.

Union's only first half scoring drive began with an 8-yard completion from Wright to Austin Pattee, followed by a 26-yard hook up with Logan Dyer to move into Saints' territory.

A third down pass to Pattee kept the drive alive and later, a reverse to wide receiver Erik Strayer left Union in a 4th-and-inches where Wright tried going back to Pattee, but a Cedar Grove defensive back broke up the pass by going over the back of the junior receiver, drawing a pass interference flag.

With a 1st-and-goal from the 10, Wright was sacked for a 5-yard loss, but quickly got those yards back on a 5-yard completion to Dyer. Facing a 3rd-and-goal from the 10, the Saints were called for defensive holding, awarding Union another crack at the endzone from the five, but that pass fell incomplete and Smith was called upon to trim the deficit to 7-3.

The ensuing Cedar Grove drive lasted four plays as they quickly found the endzone following runs of 14 and 18 yards, a completion of nine yards, and a 27-yard touchdown run to make it a 13-3 game.

A bad snap derailed the Panthers' next offensive series and with junior linebacker/punter RJ Banton out-of-action due to an injury, and long snapper Zach Payton suffering an injury in the first half, the punt team was forced to play short-handed. And following a kick-out-of-bounds by backup punter Ulises Montelongo, the home team took over at the Union



The Union County cheerleaders have worked hard all season, preparing a sign for the players to run through before all 11 games this year, home or away. Photo/Todd Forrest

County 46-yard line. On first down, the Saints' massive offensive line with two University of Georgia commits, continued to create giant holes for their speedy backs, and a 41-yard carry to the 5-yard line was the result. One play later, 6-foot-7, 240 pound quarterback and future Oklahoma State Cowboy, Jelani Woods connected on his first-and-only touchdown pass of the game to junior Isreal Spivey, who is being recruited by Michigan and Virginia Tech, making it a 20-3 contest with 1:52 to play in the first.

The Cedar Grove offensive line is offed by 4-star recruit and No. 1 offensive guard in the state (No. 4 in the nation), Netori Johnson, who at 6-4, 348 pounds, will join fellow offensive linemen and 3-star recruit, Justin Shaffer (6-5, 330 pounds) at the University of Georgia next year.

On their ensuing possession, the Panthers were on the move until a fumble derailed their scoring chances at the Saints' 27-yard line.

A kickoff return by Zach Stone out to the 42 gave Union great starting field position. From there, Wright carried for six yards and then found Pattee for five more, and a first down.

A pass to Bo Lynch went for 13 yards but a first down fumble handed the ball back to Cedar Grove, who went 73 yards on three plays.

A 20-yard run, a 31-yard pass, and a 22-yard touchdown run put Union in a 27-3 hole as the second quarter got underway.

A first down loss and a false start forced the Panthers into a 3rd-and-21, and an eventual punt that was returned to the 19-yard line. One play later, the Saints broke a 19-yard touchdown run and the 2-point conversion pass was successful for a 35-3 score with 9:31 left in the half.

Another Union County punt led to a five-play, 46-yard scoring drive, capped off by a 9-yard touchdown run that made it 42-3 with 5:20 remaining in the half.

A 49-yard scoring run at the 2:41 mark of the second quarter capped off the first half scoring as Cedar Grove took a 49-3 lead into the half.

With a running clock, the Saints opened the second half with completions of 22 and 38 yards. Facing their first third down of the game, the Saints punched a 5-yard run into the endzone.

A pick-six was the result of Union's first possession of the second half and with 5:42 left in the third, Cedar Grove had scored in all three phases of the game and held a 63-3 advantage.

The two teams would exchange punts before Union took over at their own 16-yard to begin the fourth.

A 6-yard run by Lynch and a 12-yard pass to Dyer was followed by a 4-yard carry by Wright. Lynch used his legs for 8 more yards before Wright ran for 17 yards on third down.

A shovel-pass to Stone was good for 12 yards and an 11-yard toss to Hemphill moved the Panthers into the redzone, where Wright took a quarterback draw for 11 yards and his team's first touchdown of the game.

Trailing 63-10, the Panthers defense forced a three-and-out and Hemphill called for a fair catch on the punt at the 36.

Short completions to Dyer and Hemphill put Union at midfield where Strayer hauled in a 22-yard pass. With time running out, Wright connected with Hemphill in the endzone for a 30-yard score – bringing the scoring to a close at 63-17.

At deadline, the unofficial stats were unavailable. The unofficial stats are as follows:

Team stats: Cedar Grove: 406 yards of total offense: RUSHING: 21 carries, 288 yards, 13.7 YPC. PASSING: 7-for-7, 119 yards.

Union County: 276 yards of total offense. RUSHING: 26 carries, 87 yards. PASSING: 19-for-30, 189 yards.

Individual stats: Wright 19-for-29, 189 yards, 1 TD, 1 INT. 11 carries, 70 yards, 1 TD. Lynch 11 carries, 21 yards, 2 receptions, 14 yards.

Hemphill 4 receptions, 46 yards, 1 TD. Pattee 5 receptions, 36 yards. Dyer 4 receptions, 50 yards. Strayer 3 receptions, 31 yards, 2 carries, 6 yards. Stone 1 reception, 12 yards, 1 carry, 6 yards.

Scoring summary:

1ST QUARTER
CG: 55-yard punt return for TD (0-7)

UC: 16 plays, 75 yards. Smith 22-yard FG (3-7)

CG: 4 plays, 61 yards, 27-yard TD run. (3-13)

CG: 2 plays, 46 yards, 5-yard TD pass. (3-20)

2ND QUARTER
CG: 3 plays, 73 yards, 23-yard TD run. (3-27)

CG: 1 play, 19 yards, 19-yard TD run. 2-pt conv. (3-35)

CG: 4 plays, 46 yards, 9-yard TD run. (3-42)

CG: 2 plays, 55 yards, 49-yard TD run. (3-49)

3RD QUARTER
CG: 6 plays, 77 yards, 5-yard TD run. (3-56)

CG: 25-yard Interception return for TD. (3-63)

4TH QUARTER
UC: 11 plays, 84 yards, Wright 11-yard TD run. (10-63)

UC: 5 plays, 64 yards, Hemphill 30-yard TD pass from Wright. (17-63)

Game notes: Smith finishes the season with 63 points.

Wright finishes the year with 3,282 total yards and 35 TDs. His 1,440 rushing yards and 20 rushing scores are the most by any



Freshman holder Pierson Allison (17) looks on as sophomore kicker Brian Smith puts Union County on the board with a field goal during the playoff game at Cedar Grove. Photo/Todd Forrest



Junior quarterback Cole Wright accounted for both Union touchdowns at Cedar Grove last Saturday night. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior defensive back Zach Stone sheds a blocker before making a tackle on a Cedar Grove ball carrier. Photo/Todd Forrest

Panther player in 26-plus years. Since Georgia high schools began playing a 10-game schedule

in the early 1960's, there have been 18 different Union County teams that didn't total 20 rushing touchdowns in an entire season.

Lynch's 764 rushing yards, 15 rushing TDs, and 216 receiving yards are all career highs.

Hemphill's 395 receiving yards and 4 receiving TDs were both team highs - he now joins Blake Gowder (2007) as the only sophomore to lead the team in both categories during this century.

Seven different Panthers caught a touchdown pass and six different receivers hauled in more than 100 receiving yards on the year - both are believed to be firsts in program history.

Seven different Panthers finished with at least 10 catches on the year - also believed to be another first.

Around the region: No. 1 GAC 35, No. 4 Pace Academy 17, No. 2 Dawson County 28, No. 3 Lovett 49, No. 4 North Hall 18, Westminster 49.



Bo Lynch (5) wraps up his Union County career as one of the most highly decorated running backs in the history of the program. Much of his success can be attributed to Blaine Brown (78) and Tyler McConnell (59) and the rest of the seniors on the Panther offensive line. Photo/Todd Forrest



Sophomore Kanon Hemphill reels in a Cole Wright pass during the second half of Union's playoff game. Photo/Todd Forrest

Swim teams third and sixth at Habersham

Union County High and Middle Schools attended a swim meet last Saturday Nov. 12 at Ruby Clarkright Aquatic Center in Clarksville. Overall the high school finished 6th and the middle school finished 3rd at the meet.

Union County had several top 10 finishes and a new High School Record in 100 Fly by Kaiya Wilkes and a new Middle School record by Luke Gambrell in the 50 Yard Fly where he also took 1st place.

The Union County Middle School Relay Teams received first place in the Medley Relay and the Freestyle Relay.

Luke Gambrell also received 1st place in the 50 Yard Breaststroke.

5th Place HS: Gavin Thompson, Jeremy Herum, Adian Francis, Steven Williams, 1st Place MS: Wilson Walker, Hunter White, Luke Gambrell & Alden Wilkes, 7th Place HS: Savannah Damon, Grace Weldon, Kaiya Wilkes & Leannah Gambrell, 3rd Place MS: Danielle Grader, Libby Hendrick, Courtney Foster, Hannah Patterson
200-Yard Freestyle
8th Place HS Tyler Harkins
200-Yd Individual Medley
2nd Place HS Grace Weldon
100-Yd Individual Medley
2nd Place MS Hunter White, 5th Place MS Alden Wilkes, 4th Place MS Danielle Grader, 6th Place MS Courtney Foster
50-Yard Freestyle
2nd Place MS Michael Leird, 4th Place MS Wilson

Walker, 6th Place MS Riley Howse, 7th Place MS Libby Hendrick
100-Yard Butterfly
6th Place HS Aidan Francis
50-Yard Butterfly
1st Place MS Luke Gambrell (MS School Record),
100-Yard Butterfly
7th Place HS Kaiya Wilkes (HS School Record)
100-Yard Freestyle
10th Place HS Ean Harkins, 5th Place, MS Cale Winkler, 8th Place, MS Riley Howse, 3rd Place MS Danielle Grader, 7th Place MS. Hannah Patterson
500-Yard Freestyle
6th Place HS Leannah Gambrell
200-Yard Freestyle Relay
8th Place HS: Jeremy Herum, Gavin Thompson, Aidan Francis, Steven Williams, 1st Place MS: Hunter

White, Wilson Walker, Alden Wilkes, Luke Gambrell, 6th Place MS: Preston Perren, Michael Leird, Riley Lowry, Cale Winkler, 9th Place HS: Kaiya Wilkes, Leannah Gambrell, McKenzie Hooper, Grace Weldon, 4th Place MS: Danielle Grader, Libby Hendrick, Hannah Patterson, Courtney Foster
100-Yard Backstroke
7th Place HS Grace Weldon
50-Yard Backstroke
6th Place MS Cale Winkler
4th Place MS Courtney Foster
50-Yard Breaststroke
1st Place MS Luke Gambrell, 2nd Place MS Hunter White, 4th Place MS Alden Wilkes, 7th Place MS Michael Leird, 8th Place MS Wilson Walker

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TURKEY TROT

5K & PRAYER WALK
Saturday, November 19, 2016 – Meeks Park

Time: 8:00 a.m. Registration Opens – Pre-Register at Active.com
9:00 a.m. Run & Prayer Walk begins

Place: 490 Meeks Park Road, Blairsville, GA 30512

Cost: \$25 pre-registration (Active.com) – T-shirt included
\$30 Race Day – T-shirt available while supplies last

Awards: Top overall male & female runners. Top three runners in each age group: 10-under, 11-14, 15-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-over

All Proceeds to benefit Deputy Mitchell Henderson