

Sports

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Lady Panthers remain undefeated following win at Rabun Gap

By Todd Forrest
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DILLARD - The Union County Lady Panthers improved to 4-0 following a 50-41 victory at Rabun Gap-Nacoochee -- the only game of the week after Saturday's contest at Towns County was postponed by Winter Storm Diego.

In the win, the Lady Panthers overcame a sluggish start to take a 13-11 advantage after one quarter despite trailing 5-0 right out of the gates. Union County would stretch its lead to 27-19 at the break behind 14 first-half points from Andelin Hill.

Hill would finish with a 17-point, 10-rebound double-double on 5-of-10 shooting from the floor, 3-for-6 from long distance and 4-for-4 at the foul line. The junior forward also recorded 3 steals and an assist in the win.

Hill's final bucket of the night came on a corner-three during the waning seconds of the third quarter, opening up the Lady Panthers' largest lead of the night at 42-26.

After both squads traded a free throw early in the fourth, freshman Ava Hunter put Union County on top 45-27 with 6:48 remaining. Down 18 with under 6 minutes remaining, Rabun Gap roared back to life with a 12-0 run that was sparked by a triple at the 5:50 mark.

A base line jumper with 4:04 to play sliced the Lady Panther lead to six at 45-39 as the Lady Eagles turned up the pressure on the defensive end, forcing Union County to cough up the basketball four times in the first 3-plus minutes of the fourth quarter.

With 3:33 on the clock, the Lady Panthers turned to Hunter, who halted the run with a bucket in the paint. Nineteen seconds later, Rabun Gap had the opportunity to trim the deficit to five but was unable to sink a free throw and convert the old-fashioned 3-point play.



L-R: Junior Andelin Hill pulls up and sinks a three at Rabun Gap as the first quarter comes to a close. Hill would score 14 of her game-high 17 points in the first half. Junior Kait McCarter (5) gets inside position at Rabun Gap for 2 of her season-high 14 points. Photos/Todd Forrest

On the ensuing Union County possession, Hunter scored the bucket and drew a foul but was unable to sink her free throw -- keeping the lead at 49-41 with 2:54 on the clock.

Still up by eight with under a minute remaining, the Lady Panthers misfired on the front-end of a 1-and-1 chance at the 59-second and 35-second marks. Luckily, Rabun Gap used up all of its ammo while erasing the 18-point deficit and Union's 49-41 advantage remained intact until Brooke Dockrey sank 1-of-2 from the line following an offensive board by Hill on a previous miss from the stripe.

Junior Kait McCarter added 14 points, 3 boards, 3 steals and 2 assists while doing most of her damage in the first and third quarters. Her free throw at the 4:56 mark of the first put the Lady Panthers on the board while trailing 5-0. She also sank a trey with 1:33 left in the opening period to pull Union within a point at 9-8.

The first period closed with a bang as Hill nailed a pull-up three from the top-of-the-key to give her team a 13-11 advantage as the buzzer sounded.

A McCarter deuce at the 6:57 mark of the second gave Union a 17-13 lead, then a free throw from the junior made it 18-15, moments later.

A put-back attempt led to a pair of free throws by Hunter that made it 20-17 with 2:49 to play before halftime. Following a slow first half that saw the team's leading scorer limited to just four points, Hunter came on strong to finish with 13 points, 6 rebounds and 3 steals despite a subpar 3-of-8 performance at the charity stripe.

The low-post duo of Hunter and McCarter struggled to find a shooting rhythm, combining to hit 10-of-26 from the floor and 5-for-12 at the line. McCarter would finish a respectable 2-of-6 from 3-point territory.

Junior point guard Brooke Dockrey recorded a team-high 7

assists to go with 4 rebounds and 2 points.

Senior Adeline Dockrey chipped in 2 points, 2 rebounds, one assist and one steal. With her team clinging to a 20-19 lead in the second quarter, Adeline Dockrey knocked down a pair of free throws at the 1:28 mark. Moments later, Hill would make the Lady Eagles pay by converting a turnover into three points on the other end. Leading 25-19, Hill completed a 7-0 run by sinking a 15-footer to send Union into the break with a 27-19 advantage.

On top 28-19 early in the third, McCarter scored five-straight points in 37 seconds with a three followed by a layup.

A McCarter put-back pushed the advantage to 36-22 just inside the midway point of the third but Rabun Gap used back-to-back buckets to pull within 10. As the clock ticked under two minutes, sophomore Kyla Locklear hit a mid-range jumper, sparking a 6-0 spurt to



L-R: Junior Andelin Hill pulls up and sinks a three at Rabun Gap as the first quarter comes to a close. Hill would score 14 of her game-high 17 points in the first half. Junior Kait McCarter (5) gets inside position at Rabun Gap for 2 of her season-high 14 points. Photos/Todd Forrest

close the quarter. Hunter followed with a 1-for-2 trip to the line and Hill capped off the run with a 3-ball in the final seconds.

Locklear finished with 2 points, one rebound and one steal.

As a team, Union County shot 43-percent (16-for-37) from the floor, 38-percent (5-for-13) from beyond the arc and 54-percent (13-for-24) at the line.

The canceled Towns County game will be made up on Tuesday, Dec. 11 with the varsity beginning at 6 p.m. and both JV squads getting underway at 3:30 p.m. in Hiawassee.

The Lady Indians have dropped 3-of-4 after losing at Union last month. Towns fell 42-20 at Lumpkin County, defeated Athens Christian 49-28, were knocked off 53-46 at Tallulah Falls and were dismantled by Rabun County 75-15.

Region 8-AA play opens this weekend when the Panthers travel to Elbert County for a 7

p.m. showdown.

The Lady Blue Devils are currently 3-4 with wins over Berea, SC and a pair of victories vs Washington-Wilkes.

The losses came to Hart County (twice), Madison County and Daniel, SC.

Junior point guard Maggie Campbell leads the team in points (12.7), assists (2.0) and steals (2.3). Senior Shakira Ardistar is tops on the squad in rebounding at 4-per-game.

Senior Jamara Rambert leads the way with 1.3 blocked shots a night.

The region home-opener will take place Saturday afternoon when Monticello visits the mountains for a 2 p.m. tip-off.

The Lady Canes are currently 1-5 but every loss has come by single digits. Their lone victory was a 57-48 home win over Jones County.

Losses were to Upson-Lee (twice), Eastside, Jackson and at Jones County.

Union County overwhelmed at Rabun Gap in 73-40 defeat

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DILLARD - The short-handed Panthers took a 73-40 loss on the chin last week courtesy of Rabun Gap-Nacoochee.

Without the services of athletic swingman Sawyer Brey, Union County (2-2) looked out-of-sync against the much-larger Eagles squad.

The final Panther lead of the night came at 8-6 off buckets by Sawyer Drake and Pierson Allison as it would be tough sledging the rest of the way for the junior duo.

Colton Day picked up some of the slack, sinking consecutive threes late in the first, but it wasn't enough as Rabun Gap led 22-12 after one. Day would sink two at the line and Kanon Hemphill followed with a pair of baskets as Union County still trailed 29-18 at the midway point of the second.

That's the last time the Panthers would find themselves within striking distance as back-to-back triples sparked an 8-0 Eagle run, quickly blowing things open at 37-18.

Baskets by Britt Waller and Hemphill momentarily stopped the bleeding but a Rabun Gap jumper found the bottom of the net as time expired in the first half -- stretching the margin to 41 at 43-22.

Another 8-0 Eagle run followed two Drake free throws before Allison ended the drought with a driving layup. Rabun Gap extended the lead to 56-26 with a free throw at the 4:01 mark of the third, then five-straight points from Hemphill, plus an Allison steal-and-score would cut the deficit to 60-33 entering the fourth.

Coleson Daniel and Christian Robertson got in on the scoring in the fourth quarter as Rabun Gap put the finishing touches on a convincing 73-40 victory.

Hemphill led the way with 11 while Allison and Drake scored 8 points apiece. Drake chipped in six, Robertson added three with Waller and Daniel finishing with two each.

The canceled Towns County game will be made up on Tuesday, Dec. 11 with the varsity beginning at 6 p.m. and both JV squads getting underway at 3:30 p.m. in Hiawassee.



L-R: Colton Day (34) defends the perimeter during the second half at Rabun Gap. The sophomore would finish with 8 points. Senior Kanon Hemphill (10) drives to the basket during the second half of last week's loss at Rabun Gap. His 11 points would lead the Panthers. Photos/Todd Forrest

Towns County's guys have lost 3-of-4 since their rally fell short at Union County last month.

The Indians fell 55-36 at Lumpkin County, won 70-63 at Athens Christian, lost 59-49 at Tallulah Falls and most recently suffered a 110-74 defeat to Rabun County despite leading by double-digits in the second quarter.

Region 8-AA play opens this weekend when the Panthers visit Elbert County for a 7 p.m. showdown.

The Blue Devils currently sport a 4-1 record with the lone blemish a 55-52 loss at Hart County that was avenged 46-39, eight days later. Elbert also owns a pair of victories over winless Washington-Wilkes and a 43-38 victory vs Madison County.

The region home-opener will take place Saturday afternoon when a struggling Monticello squad makes the trip north for a 2 p.m. tip-off.

The Hurricanes are currently 0-9 -- as of this writing -- with the nine losses coming by an average margin of 26.3 points. The bright spot has been senior guard Kedrion Jackson, who is averaging 13 points-a-game. His backcourt mate, Jay Fleetwood, is currently scoring at a clip of 10 points-a-night.



Union County senior Christian Robertson (22) battles for a rebound among the trees at Rabun Gap. Photo/Todd Forrest



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