

# Sports

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## Smith delivers in Friday night thriller vs Oglethorpe

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Eighty minutes of action and two overtime periods wasn't enough to settle things between Union County and Oglethorpe County - bringing about one of the most thrilling moments in all of sports - soccer's penalty kick session.

After four penalty kicks from each team, the game still remained all even.

That's when Union County senior T.J. Smith decided enough is enough.

After Oglethorpe coolly converted four consecutive penalty kicks, nerves set in and the Patriots' fifth and final kick sailed right of the bar, setting the stage for Smith.

Smith drilled his kick past the diving goalie and the celebration ensued.

As Smith raced down the far sideline, he was mobbed by teammates while Union Head Coach Tim Hunter, in a show of sportsmanship, consoled a distraught Oglethorpe goalie and addressed the visitors.

"He played (their goalie) very well throughout the course of the game," Coach Hunter



Players dog pile T.J. Smith after his game winning penalty kick to give the Panthers a win in its Region 8-AA opener with Oglethorpe.

said. "I told him at the end of the game that he played a fantastic game and he was one of the big reasons they made it to the shootout. Stopping a penalty kick is one of the most difficult tasks for a keeper especially if it is well placed."

"I also addressed their team and told them that they

had played with skill and class and their school had every right to be proud of their efforts. Usually making four-out-of-five wins you a penalty shootout, but our kickers were absolutely brilliant, and hit five-for-five."

The Patriot keeper was beaten on all five spot kicks, which began with Kyle Hamby, then Jesus Mancillas, Jair Gonzalez, and Eric Hougrand each converted.

Union's freshman goalie, Justin Eigel allowed four penalty kicks but it was good enough to allow the Panthers to pick up the win.

"I was so proud of how hard our guys competed for that win," Coach Hunter said. "We were shorthanded as starting defender Josh Troche was out for the game due to surgery."

"We are not a very deep team but we had a lot of guys step up to give us good minutes to help preserve the win."

Prior to the penalty kick session Union had three shot attempts in the second overtime period but none found the net.

In the first overtime,



T.J. Smith's after-goal celebration. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Jair Gonzalez (#13) goes for a header. Photo/Todd Forrest

Gonzalez's game winner with eight seconds to play was thwarted by another stop from the Patriot goal keeper.

However, just moments earlier, overtime had to be the last thing on Union's mind as they built a tangible 3-1 lead in the 54th minute of the game. The Panthers maintained the two goal advantage until the 63rd minute when the Patriots pounced on a defensive miscue and snuck one past goalie Jacob Rogers from inside the box, after the Panthers were unable to clear the ball.

"We had two defensive miscues," Coach Hunter said. "We stabbed at the ball and it allowed a free run, one-on-one with the keeper. Which is almost an impossible feat for the keepers."

With Eigel back in the game, the Patriots struck again in the 76th minute, squaring the contest at 3-3.



Eric Hougrand in action during the second half of last Friday night's victory. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Panther offense immediately attacked the Patriots in the waning moments of regulation but were unable to avoid overtime.

"T.J. (Smith) had a great shot that hit the post and we fired several shots right at the keeper," Coach Hunter said. "That's one of the crazy things about soccer, you can have all the opportunities in the world and if you are only off by inches then you don't score."

Most teams would fold under such adversity. Although, Coach Hunter could tell by looking in his players' eyes that they were confident going into the overtime and penalty kicks.

"I hate that we didn't close the game out like we should have, but when we stepped to the spot, I really had a lot of confidence in my guys," Coach Hunter said. "I really didn't tell them anything before we kicked besides 'we've got this.' They were ready and it was obvious by their body language that they weren't shying away from the challenge."

In the early stages of the contest, Union went on the offensive, as Hougrand found Gonzalez for a quick score during the seventh minute of the first half.

The Patriots responded less than two minutes later, tying things at 1-1.

Forty-five seconds later Hougrand picked up his second assist when Smith continued the offensive onslaught countering with a goal in the 11th minute of the half.

In the second half, Gonzalez rewarded Hougrand by assisting the left-footed senior who scored from the left flank, giving Union its 3-1 advantage.

"Hougrand has been a huge key to our offense as once again he either scored or assisted on every goal," Coach Hunter said.

Later in the evening the Union County Lady Panthers suffered a 2-0 loss at the hands of the 8th-ranked Oglethorpe

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## Union lets one slip vs North Murray; sweep twin bill at Oglethorpe

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Union County suffered its first loss of the season last week after giving away a 3-0 lead entering the fourth inning. On Saturday, the Panthers made the journey to Lexington where they swept Oglethorpe County in a Region 8-AA doubleheader.

Junior pitchers Calvin Duckworth and Lane Everett each worked complete games against the Patriots.

In the opener Duckworth picked up his second win of 2013, striking out nine and allowing an earned run in Union's 9-3 victory.

Everett went the distance in game two, also picking up his second win of the season as the Panthers prevailed 8-3.

"Lane (Everett) had one strikeout, but was effective the entire game and had their hitters off balance," Union County Head Coach Brandon Bradburn said.

During the first game, Union posted 4 runs in the second and 3 in the seventh. Jared Croskey knocked in 4 runs and Zach Odom scored 4 times, going 2-for-2 at the plate with a triple and 2 walks.

The senior shortstop opened the game with a single and would later score on a Wes Aulet groundout.

In the second inning, Luther Jones made his season debut after doctors cleared him to play the day before.

Jones singled to right, Robert Prunier laid down a sacrifice bunt, Chase Barnett picked up an RBI single, Odom walked, then Croskey drove in 2 with a two-out single.

The Patriots cut the Panther lead in half at 4-2 in the fourth following a walk, stolen base, a hit by pitch, and three Panther errors.

Union scored again in the top half of the fifth when Odom led off with a triple to right-center and scored when Croskey took the first pitch he saw down the right field line for a double.

Oglethorpe picked up its final run in the sixth inning thanks to a double, single, and a sacrifice fly.

Union's seventh inning



Senior T Bentley slides in safely at home. Photo/Todd Forrest

scoring surge was sparked by Odom's second walk. Croskey brought him in on a fielder's choice, Aulet and Everett each singled in another run.

The second contest saw Union jump out to a 6-0 lead which turned out to be plenty of run support for Everett.

T Bentley reached on a single to open the second inning, Everett brought him around with a triple, Jones and Duckworth walked before a two-out bases clearing double gave the Panthers a four run cushion.

Union put up two more in the third to take a 6-0 lead when Jackson Burks drove in two with a two-out double.

A Patriot single, triple, a walk, and a Panther error allowed Oglethorpe to post three in the third - making it a

6-3 game.

Union's final two runs came in the sixth - started by a Patriot error, allowing Duckworth to reach. Barnett singled, then Odom singled - scoring Duckworth.

Croskey reached on an error that scored pinch runner Garrett Nix.

All eight Union County runs came via the No. 4 through No. 9 spots in the lineup. Everett, Prunier, and Duckworth each scored once. Jones and Nix each added 2 runs.

Odom went 2-for-3 and Bentley finished 2-for-4.

"We looked pretty good and we came out aggressive on offense with a really good approach at the plate," Coach Bradburn said. "Our pitching held them down for the most part and we played pretty good

defense in both games."

In Union's 4-3 loss to North Murray, the Panthers let a 3-0 lead slip away late.

Lane Everett started the game and worked into the third inning before giving way to Calvin Duckworth.

With Region play opening two days later, Coach Bradburn was more concerned about getting his pitchers some work before the real season began.

"Our pitching is shaping up great," Coach Bradburn said. "We had our guys on a low-mid pitch count so we could be fresh for Saturday's double header."

Meanwhile, the Union County skipper wasn't as pleased with his squad's bats as the Panthers had plenty of opportunities but struggled with runners in scoring position.

"The biggest thing we need to fix is our mental approach at the plate," Coach Bradburn said. "We left way too many people on base in scoring position."

"Getting the ball in play with one or no outs would have resulted in us scoring a lot more."

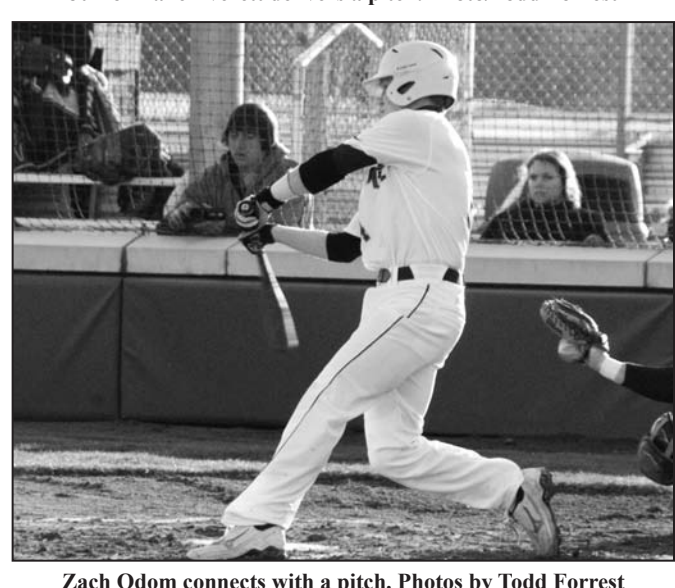
Despite the loss, overall, Coach Bradburn was pleased with his team's performance and remains optimistic while looking at the big picture.

"The positives I'm taking away is that it was our first close game, and it was a quality opponent," he said. "It was also the first time the varsity had been outside in a game situation all week due to the weather."

Region 8-AA play continues when the Panthers host Rabun County on Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.



Junior Lane Everett delivers a pitch. Photo/Todd Forrest



Zach Odom connects with a pitch. Photos by Todd Forrest



Jackson Burks



Tyler Odom



Chase Barnett

## Spring 2013 PSA Turkey Hunting

Ranger 1st Class Kevin Dyer  
GA Dept. of Natural Resources,  
Wildlife Resources Division

As turkey season approaches on March 23rd in Georgia and hunters begin to hit the woods, Rangers have the safety of turkey hunters in mind.

Safety is a key element when you are in the woods mimicking the sounds of wild turkeys.

Here are a few tips to consider when you are in the woods: sit against a large stump or blown-down tree that is wider than your shoul-

ders when calling turkeys; never wear bright colors such as red, white or blue; when using a turkey call, the sound and motion may attract the interest of other hunters; do not move, wave or make turkey-like sounds to alert another hunter to your presence, instead: identify yourself in a loud voice; put your gun's safety on and approach a downed bird with your firearm pointed in a safe direction.

For more information on hunter education or turkey hunting, call 770-535-5499 or visit [www.georgiawildlife.com](http://www.georgiawildlife.com).