

Sports

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Red hot shooting has Panthers back on track

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Usually a 49-point victory over an out-of-state school that you haven't lost to in eight years aren't the types of games that fans remember.

Although, the shooting performance that the Panthers put on for the home crowd last Saturday night is one that will be reflected upon for many years to come.

The Panthers hit 13 three pointers in just over one half of basketball and Rhett McCombs' 27-point first half is the most since Michael Ross had 28 at halftime during his record setting 49-point outing in 2008.

McCombs hit five treys in the first seven minutes and finished with 30 points despite sitting the majority of the second half. More importantly, for the second time this season, the Union County Panthers (14-2) answered a loss with back-to-back wins.

Following what could have been a demoralizing defeat at the hands of Greene County, the Panthers went on the road last Friday night to Oglethorpe County and escaped with a 46-44 victory.

On Saturday, McCombs provided fans with one of the most explosive scoring outbursts in Union County history as Union slammed Andrews, NC 85-36.

The senior nailed five treys in the first quarter for 19 points. McCombs' sixth trey of the frame was waved off due to a traveling violation.

When the Panther guard was pulled at the 5:02 mark of the third quarter, he took 30 points, six treys, and 3 steals to the bench joining the rest of the Panther starting five.

Union County broadsided the Wildcats with a 27-0 blitzkrieg to open the second frame that gave the Panthers a 52-10 lead with a minute to play in the first half.

The Panthers connected 13 times from beyond the arc in the first 19 minutes of action before Coach David Tucker called off his sharpshooters and



Senior Rhett McCombs hits one of Union's 13 three pointers against Andrews, NC on Saturday night. Photo/Todd Forrest

turned to the bench.

McCombs opened the contest with eight straight points making it an 8-1 game out of the gates. James Rowe drilled a trey, and then McCombs went off.

Four straight treys by McCombs from three different locations on the court put Union up 22-8. C.J. Byers closed the quarter with consecutive buckets for a 26-10 Panther lead after one.

Another three ball from Rowe sparked Union's 27-0 run in the second. McCombs hit a free throw, then a runner in the paint and a trey from Rowe were followed by a three point play, courtesy of McCombs.

Rowe, en route to an 11-point quarter knocked down his third trey of the period at the 4:28 mark.

After playing the role of distributor for most of the half, Zach Odom, who finished with a season-high 9 assists, got in on the action with a 3-pointer from the wing and a lay up. McCombs added consecutive lay ins and Tyler Odom connected from downtown, capping off Union's run and sending the

Panthers to the break with a 53-14 advantage.

The third frame opened with more of the same. Zach Odom nailed a trey, Byers hit 1-of-2 from the line, Dylan Coyne knocked down a jumper, and with 5:11 to play in the third, McCombs hit his sixth and final trey of the evening.

Leading 61-16, the Panther starters took the rest of the night off.

Hunter Hughes picked up 4 points in the third quarter with Matthew Wasko and Kyle Hamby each reaching the scoring column.

Ahead by 47 points entering a mercy-rule shortened fourth quarter, Ralston Drake, Hamby, and Wasko scored 4 points each. Elijah Ryals hit a corner jumper and Tyler Odom connected once from the stripe.

Rowe finished with 14 points on four treys, 8 boards, 5 assists, and 4 steals. Zach Odom had 8 points and 4 steals to go along with his 9 assists.

Hamby had 6 points and 3 steals, Wasko put up 6 points, Byers scored 5 points, while Tyler Odom, Hughes, and

Drake added 4 points each. Ryals and Coyne chipped in two a piece and Thomas Danek had 3 steals and blocked a shot.

Union County's 85-point onslaught is the most points scored by a Panther team since Jan. 25th, 2008 when Union put up 94 points against Banks County - the same night Ross went for 49 points.

On Friday night, Union County held off a relentless Oglethorpe County squad in Lexington for the Panthers' first Region 8-AA victory of the season.

Battling early foul trouble, Union County held a 10-6 lead after one quarter, and stretched its lead to double figures at 23-12 midway through the second frame.

Leading 27-20 at the half, Oglethorpe stormed back to hold a slight edge at 29-28. The Panthers responded with a 10-4 run to close the third quarter and take a 39-33 lead into the fourth.

A trey from Zach Odom allowed Union to open up a nine-point advantage before the Patriots sliced into the Panther lead. McCombs would hit four free throws in the final moments to keep Oglethorpe at bay. However a Patriot trey made it a 46-44 game with less than 10 seconds to play.

McCombs missed the front end of a 1-and-1 attempt but Danek snagged the offensive board - securing the Panther win.

McCombs led the Panthers with 17 points and 5 steals. Zach Odom scored 14 points with 3 steals. Rowe scored all 8 of his points in the first half while grabbing 5 boards.

Coyne and Byers hauled in 11 boards each with Coyne scoring 5 points and picking up 2 steals. Byers added 2 assists and 2 points.

The Panthers will open Sub-Region 8-AA North play on Tuesday when Riverside travels to Blairsville. The Eagles fell 64-59 to Washington-Wilkes on Friday. Tip off is at 6 p.m. Friday the Panthers host Social Circle at 6 p.m. then visit Fannin on Saturday for an early 4 p.m. tip.



Joe Collins
Tips from the Range

There is an old cliché that almost every new golfer will hear from those who are trying to help them learn and that statement sounds like this, "Keep your left (forward) arm straight and your head down." Have you ever heard this while struggling to swing the club?

I am sure most of you have and I am concerned that it might not have been explained properly so here goes.

The concept of keeping the left arm completely straight is a difficult maneuver to execute but is very important in trying to hit the ball consistently.

Many good players will actually find that they bend their forward arm a little at the top and that is not all bad as long as it is not profound and extreme. A slight bend is not recommended but can be a part of a solid swing although the player is trying very hard to limit that subtle angle.

Many top players will allow a slight crook to appear at the top of the swing in order to get a more full turn but will re-straighten as the arms leave the top most point of the back swing arc and drop back in front of the chest on the way down.

Check out the two time U.S. Open Champion Curtis Strange's swing sometime to see what I am talking about. "He is the one player that I carried for in my career that never left shots on the course," stated the late Greg Rita, P.G.A. Tour caddy and a golfing buddy of mine. A slight bend can't be all bad if it produced a U.S. Open Champion, twice!

The importance of the straight forward arm throughout the swing is found in the extension it provides from the core

of the body in relation to the responsibility of the shoulders. It is the one thing that will guide the back arm on the correct path into the hitting area from the top down as the weight transfers to the front side. If the forward arm bends, then there is a good chance that the club head will get "buried" behind your hips and force the hands into action during impact and this is the death of a possible good shot. Keep the forward arm straight to maintain the turning of the shoulders, around the spine, as far as you can into the follow through. This will enhance the extension of the arms through impact and make for a better day on the course.

As far as the meaning of "keep your head down" goes, forget it. If you keep your head down, the spine will incur a slight bend at the top where it connects to your head and this will block any hopes of getting a full turn with the chest and shoulders, and in relation, not allow you to turn around the spine.

This reminds me of a turtle that is barely sticking its head out from its shell. The phrase should say, "Keep your chin up, your eyes on the ball and your head still."

Remember, the spine has to maintain its original position established at address to promote good ball striking. You must keep your chin up so that the spine will remain straight. To achieve this, try and pick your chin up enough to make you look over the top of your face cheeks when addressing the ball. You will find that you have more room to turn and a bigger "slot" on the downswing.

Practice is the key to better golf and a more enjoyable experience on the course so find some time to work on your game and you will see it improve.

Good luck and I will see you on the course!

Top 10 reasons your son should wrestle

By Michael Smith-Foot
Union County Wrestling Coach
Special to North Georgia News

Wrestling is a new sport in this county but has had several very successful programs in local counties. We expect the same success for our county in the near future by adding programs for youth, middle, and high schools. The only thing missing in our programs is more young athletes from 5 to 15. Below are the Top 10 reasons why your sons should wrestle next year.

- 1) Wrestling is easy to learn because it is natural.** Animals wrestle. Put two toddlers in a playpen and see what happens. Anyone can wrestle, from the really tall and skinny to the short and thick. It takes all body types. There are many boys that come out and in their first season have a winning record.
- 2) Wrestling teaches skills to help in other sports.** Wrestling builds endurance, teaches focus, and helps develop stances and movements that are used in baseball, soccer, football, and martial arts. Skills like blocking, tackling, hand fighting, and lateral movement are all used in wrestling. Check out how many football players in the Hall of Fame have wrestling backgrounds. Three out of four fighting in the M.M.A. have wrestling backgrounds.
- 3) Wrestling keeps you in shape for other sports.** As mentioned earlier, wrestling builds endurance. It also helps when trying to keep a low body fat and good fighting weight. Many wrestlers go to other sports and find themselves in better shape than others that just play one sport. Very few athletes go into wrestling and already have the lungs developed that we need.
- 4) Wrestling is safer than other sports.** We have very few injuries in our sport due to competing against people your own size. Every year cheerleading, football, soccer, and basketball log more injuries and more serious injuries than wrestling. The sport looks rough, but is actually very controlled due to a referee being assigned to only two wrestlers.
- 5) Wrestling is fair.** You only compete against boys your size and close to your age. No 100-pound boy ever wrestles a 200-pound athlete. If you want to be varsity you challenge for the spot. Coaches do not pick the team. The boys wrestle to decide it. We have weight classes as low as 75 pounds for middle school and 100 pounds for high school. Little kid classes go down to 35 pounds.
- 6) Wrestling is cheaper than most sports.** Most teams require shoes and headgear which can be purchased for less than \$30. A lot of boys get shoes and headgear from older wrestlers or even dads.
- 7) Everyone can be successful in wrestling.** You can be tall and skinny or short and thick. You can have a lot of muscle or mostly brains. You can be musical or into comics and Sci Fi. Whatever you have that makes you special can be used to win in wrestling: strength, speed, flexibility, endurance, brains, or just lots of time to train. Some of the best wrestlers are not natural athletes, but kids that work hard and train more than others.
- 8) Wrestling is an individual and team sport.** You do not have to be great or on a great team to be in wrestling. You can go to state as a team or as the one qualifier from your team. If you want it bad enough, it will happen. You get the benefits of an individual sport and the feel of a team sport.
- 9) Wrestling is not a four-month season.** Wrestling requires a lot of dedication. To be a stand out, you need to wrestle year around. Keeping you on the mat keeps you out of trouble, focused on your grades, and in shape for the other sports you play. There is no off season in wrestling, but our team does work around other sport schedules so you can do both or even three.
- 10) Wrestling is for any age.** Wrestling is not a sport it's a lifestyle. There are people that start as early as 3 and keep wrestling into their 80's. There are even tournaments for Pre-K and Senior Citizens. We start working with athletes as early as 5 and work with them into and past their college years. Most people when high school is over their sport time is done, but you can compete in wrestling until you want to stop.

If you have any questions please contact Coach Smith-Foot at a practice in the Union County Elementary gym (The Pit) or by e-mail at msmith-foot@ucschools.org. Anyone is more than welcome to check out a practice or match. We have home matches in The Pit every Tuesday all through January.

Easy does it for Lady Panthers over the weekend

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Things couldn't get much simpler for the Union County Lady Panthers (11-5) as it did over the weekend.

First Union notched a 61-16 victory over a helpless Oglethorpe County Lady Patriot team.

And then on Saturday, the Lady Panthers hosted Andrews, NC and picked up a 46-29 win. Albeit a 17-point victory was a little closer than expected considering Union had previously defeated Andrews 56-22 and 68-34 earlier in the season.

The Lady Panthers never trailed during their game with Andrews but were unable to put the Lady Wildcats away early.

Then sophomore Brooke Maddox put up 14 second half points en route to her second 20-point performance and the Lady Panthers kept Andrews safely in their rear view mirrors.

Carly Adams and Maddox each hit an early trey, Jeanelle Arnold drove the lane for two and Hannah Hughes hit a jumper to give Union a 10-5 edge after one.

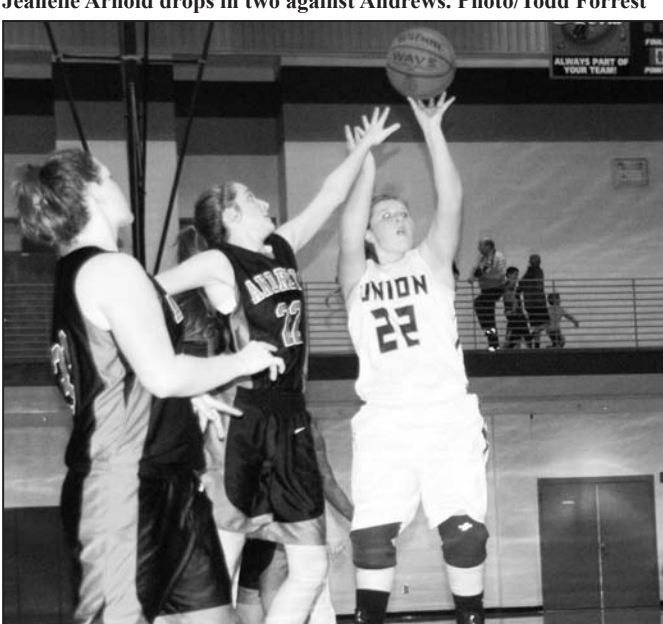
Following a free throw by Hughes, the Lady Wildcats got within two points at 11-9 but the second of Maddox's five treys stretched the cushion to five points. Zollinger scored off an in bounds pass when the junior hit a baseline jumper. Sophomore Kaitlyn Day hit a running jumper at the 1:24 mark of the half, giving the Lady Panthers an 18-11 lead at the half.

Andrews scored 22 seconds into the third quarter but Arnold answered with a lay up and Hughes knocked down another jumper. Arnold followed suit with a 15-footer before Zollinger and Maddox both connected from long range.

The pair of threes allowed Union to open up a 30-20 lead with 1:59 left in the third. Andrews hit a free throw



Jeanelle Arnold drops in two against Andrews. Photo/Todd Forrest



Hannah Hughes knocks down a 12-foot jumper. Photo/Todd Forrest

but sophomore Lisa Nalaschi pulled down an offensive board and scored.

The Lady Wildcats refused to go away as they converted an old fashioned 3-point play cutting the Lady Panther lead to eight, however Zollinger quickly nullified the Andrews points with a 3-point jumper giving Union a 35-24 advantage after three quarters.

entire Andrews squad 11-3 in the first four minutes of the fourth quarter.

Her outburst came during a stretch of less than 1-minute and 40 seconds. The scoring surge began with a corner trey at the 5:40 mark. She then hit a pull up jumper from just inside the arc, stole the ball right back, scored and was fouled. The free throw was good, giving Union a 43-27 advantage.

Twenty seconds later, Maddox connected on a dagger

trey from the corner. Leading by 19 points, Union County went to its stall offense and melted the final 3 minutes off the clock.

Maddox led the charge with 20. Zollinger did a little bit everything, scoring 8 points, dishing off 6 assists, nabbing 5 steals, and blocking two shots.

Arnold had 6 points, Hughes went for 5 points and a team-high 7 boards, Nalaschi scored 2 points with 5 rebounds, and Day rounded out the scoring with 2 points. Shawna Brown picked up 3 steals and Ariel Maurer added 6 boards.

On Friday, the Lady Panthers were as merciful as possible when they visited the long-suffering Oglethorpe County Lady Patriots.

Union opened up an early 16-2 lead and stretched that into a 33-4 lead at the break.

The Lady Panthers put up 21 points in the third quarter and seven in the fourth.

Also scoring 21 points was Zollinger. The Lady Panther point guard knocked down four treys and continued to stuff the stat sheet with 7 assists, and 5 steals.

Maddox connected three times from long distance and grabbed 6 steals in a 13-point outing. Arnold scored 9 points, pulled down 7 boards, had 5 steals, and 2 assists. Brown had 6 points and blocked a shot.

Madison Rich was heavily involved as the junior scored 2 points but had 4 rebounds, 2 assists, and 2 steals.

Others reaching the scoring column were Camryn Carter with 5 points and 2 steals, Adams with 3 points, and Day with 2 points and 2 steals.

Maurer blocked 2 shots, Hughes had 2 assists, and Nalaschi grabbed 4 boards with 2 assists and 2 steals.

The Lady Panthers are off Tuesday before hosting Social Circle on Friday at 6 p.m. Union will go for five-in-a-row over the Fannin County Lady Rebels on Saturday. Tip-off will be at 4 p.m.