

Sports

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Heartbreak in Region 8-AA opener

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The Lady Panthers suffered a gut-wrenching, 50-47 loss to Greene County after the Lady Tigers drilled a game-winning 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Union County (9-5) let a 10-point second quarter lead, and a six point lead in the final 3:47 slip away due to a 1-for-5 performance at the foul line, with three misses coming on the front-end of a 1-and-1.

The Lady Panthers appeared to have seized control when Lauren Zollinger nailed a trey from the top-of-the-key with 3:47 to play - giving Union a 46-40 lead.

Greene County converted an old fashioned 3-point play at the 3:18 mark and Union County went to its stall offense with three minutes to play.

Union County was able to burn two-minutes off the clock then Carly Adams stepped to the line for a 1-and-1 and misfired with 1:01 to go.

Jeanelle Arnold snatched the offensive board and was quickly fouled but another unsuccessful free throw was the result. The Lady Tigers went the other way and scored off an offensive rebound with 44 seconds left - shaving Union's lead to 46-45.

Zollinger missed the first of her 1-and-1 attempt when a scramble ensued under the basket for the rebound.

Arnold came up with another loose ball but as the senior fell out of bounds, a Lady Tiger intercepted her pass and Greene County was off to the races. The Lady Tigers again missed but Union was unable to secure the rebound and the ball went out of bounds, last touched by Union, with 27 seconds showing on the clock.

Four seconds later, Greene nailed a corner jumper for the lead.

Arnold took the ball the length of the court where she was fouled with 16 seconds left, sending the Union guard to the foul line for two shots.



Sophomore Brooke Maddox led the way for Union with 12 points and 3 steals against Greene County. Photo/Todd Forrest

The first attempt was unsuccessful but the second was on the money and Union was looking a tied game at 47-47.

With only three fouls being called on Union during the second half, the Lady Panthers didn't use any of their fouls-to-give and Greene County found the open shooter on the left wing for the game winner.

The Lady Panthers dropped their first Region contest of the season despite hitting nine 3-pointers, three players scoring in double-figures and a Greene County starting post player leaving the game early in the second half with a knee injury.

The achilles heel for the Lady Panthers: their woes from the foul line - going 2-7 on the night. Not only did Union attempt just two free throws in the first three quarters, they were unable to convert when it counted.

Early on it appeared that Union County's hot shooting from beyond the arc would carry the Lady Panthers to their 10th victory.

Zollinger opened the contest with a 3-pointer less than 15 seconds in. The junior would score again on a lay up giving Union a 5-1 lead.

The Lady Panthers took a 10-5 lead into the second frame where Union opened up an

18-8 advantage when Hannah Hughes nailed a corner trey with 6:16 to play before the half. Union would maintain a comfortable margin until the final minutes of the half when Greene made it a 20-18 game with 1:30 left. A Brooke Maddox steal and score in the final seconds put Union ahead 22-18 at halftime.

Shawna Brown scored two in the paint making it a 24-18 game early in the third quarter. Greene County counter-punched with a 10-3 run for the first Lady Tiger lead of the game with 5:40 left in the third.

Lisa Nalасhi, Maddox, and Arnold closed the third quarter with buckets, allowing Union to take a 40-38 lead into the fourth.

Following a Lady Tiger bucket, consecutive 3-pointers from Hughes and Zollinger gave Union its 46-40 lead with just under four minutes left.

Maddox and Hughes led the way with 12 points each, while Maddox added 3 steals.

Zollinger went for 10 points, 5 rebounds, and 5 assists. Arnold had 9 points, 5 boards, 3 assists and a blocked shot. Nalасhi and Brown each added 2 points in the paint for Union.

The Lady Panthers travel to Lexington on Friday for a meeting with Oglethorpe County.

Greene hands Panthers second loss

By Todd Forrest
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The Panthers looked to open Region 8-AA play with a victory but to no avail.

Union County (12-2) was unable to keep pace with Greene County as the Tigers pulled away thanks to a 26-10 third quarter that cemented a 67-49 Panther loss.

Battling early foul trouble, Union was able to hang around for a half before the Tigers exploded for four treys in their 26-point third quarter.

Zach Odom and Rhett McCombs came out firing away and scored all 17 of Union's first quarter points.

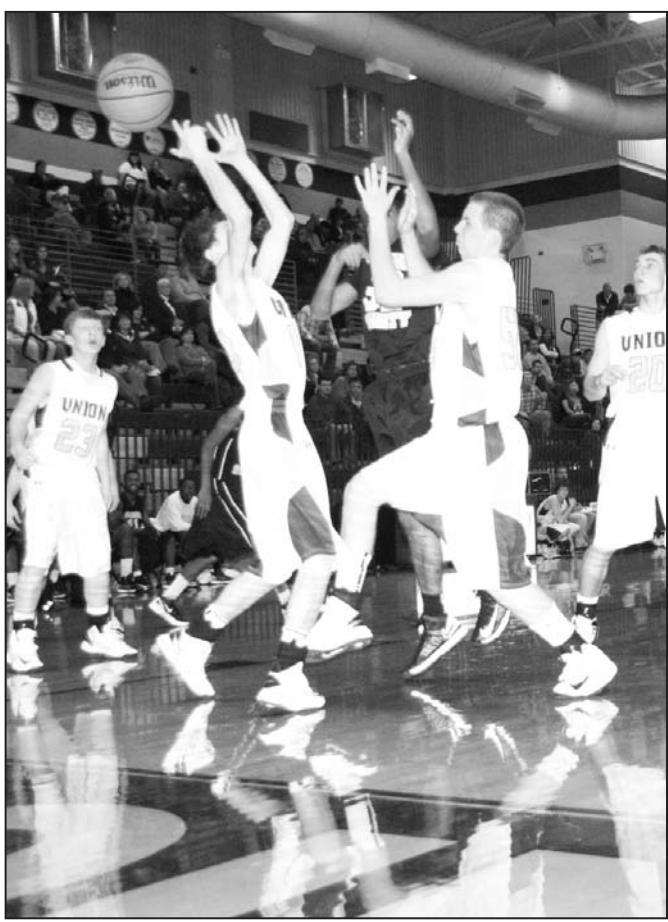
Odom opened the game with a trey, McCombs followed suit and Union led 6-2 less than two minutes in. Greene answered with five unanswered points as a see-saw battle ensued for the remainder of the quarter.

A lay in from McCombs put Union ahead at 8-7 then a trey and a lay in by Odom let Union take a 13-9 lead. Following another 5-zip spurt from the Tigers, McCombs nailed a jumper and Odom went inside for a jumper in the paint - tying the game at 17-17 after one. Odom's bucket gave the senior 10 points in the quarter, with McCombs close behind at 7 points.

The second quarter was a different story as Odom picked up his third foul with 6:34 left before the half. Dylan Coyne was whistled for his third personal at the 3:48 mark.

Before the two starters went to the bench, the Panthers were still hanging around - clinging to a five-point deficit at 25-20. The Tigers took advantage of the shorthanded Panthers and stretched its lead to double-figures at 30-20, less than 90 seconds later.

McCombs scored off a Tiger turnover and later, converted a free throw but a Greene basket with 33 seconds left gave the Tigers a 32-23 lead



Hunter Hughes and James Rowe look on as sophomore Tyler Odom and senior C.J. Byers battle for a loose ball during the second half against Greene County. Photo/Todd Forrest

at the break.

Back at full strength to start the second half, McCombs converted a 3-point play, making it a 34-26 game. McCombs scored another bucket at the 5:15 mark of the third keeping it a 10-point game but the Panthers wouldn't get any closer as Greene began sinking trey after trey.

Thomas Danek's put back made it a 13-point game but Greene answered with a three.

Odom drilled his third trey, but again, Greene knocked down another from long distance that sparked a 12-0 Tiger run to close the third quarter. When the horn sounded, the Panthers were looking up at a 58-33 disadvantage.

Sophomore Hunter Hughes entered in the fourth and sparked Union with a seven-point quarter but it wasn't

enough. Sophomore Ralston Drake scored six points in the final frame as the Panther bench pulled Union to within 15 points with 1:08 to play.

McCombs led the Panthers with 17 points and Odom finished the game with 13. Hughes scored 7 points and pick-pocketed the Tigers for 2 steals. Drake scored 6 points, Tyler Odom, James Rowe, Coyne, and Danek added 2 points each. Coyne hauled in 8 boards while Rowe grabbed 5 boards and picked up 4 assists.

Union will look to get back on track at Oglethorpe County on Friday before playing host to Andrews, NC on Saturday, with the Lady Panthers tipping at 6 p.m..

Sub-Region 8-AA North play opens Tuesday, January 15th, as the Panthers host Riverside Military Academy at 6 p.m. The JV Panthers will tip at 4:30 p.m.

Rowe, Panthers pay back Bulldogs

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Murphy, NC - The Union County Panthers (12-1) got some retribution at Murphy after the Bulldogs handed the Panthers their first loss of the season during the Battle of the States.

Union out scored Murphy 34-22 in the second half as they pulled away for a 60-49 victory last Thursday evening. Zach Odom scored 21 for his fifth straight 20-plus outing and James Rowe got back on track with 17.

The game was a see-saw battle until Union began to pull away late in the third quarter. Rhett McCombs and Rowe helped Union leap out to a 10-6 lead but Murphy closed the first quarter strong and held a 12-11 lead after one.

A trey from McCombs and a jump hook by Rowe put Union back on top briefly, until five straight points from Zach Odom gave Union a 21-15 advantage. The Bulldogs stormed back with a 9-0 run but a corner trey from Odom knotted things back up at 24-24. A Murphy bucket was answered by another inside basket from Rowe but a Bulldog free throw gave Murphy a 27-26 lead at intermission.

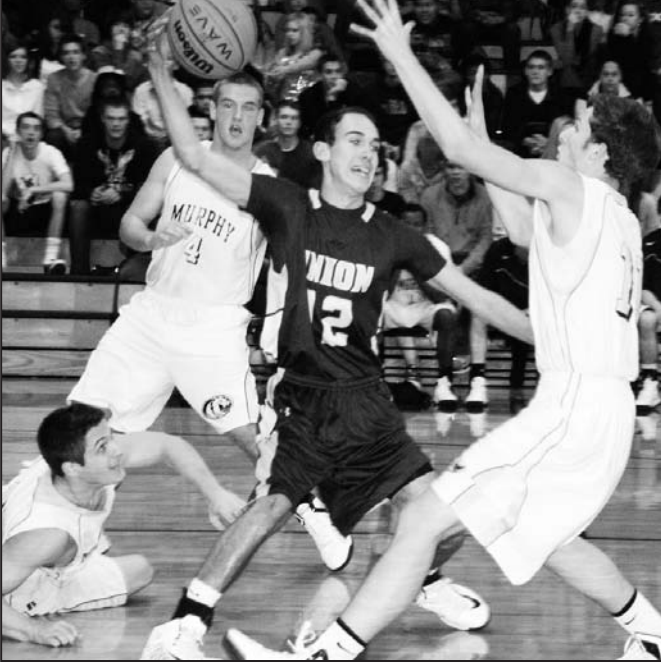
The Bulldogs stretched their lead to 29-26 until McCombs tied things up with a trey. Odom and Rowe put Union ahead at 33-31 and a free throw by McCombs made it a 34-31 game with 4:49 to play in the third quarter. Four straight from Murphy gave the Bulldogs their final lead of the night at the 3:20 mark of the third.

Two free throws by Odom, a put back from Thomas Danek, then a nifty reverse lay up by Odom put Union ahead 40-35. Odom closed out the quarter with another corner trey giving Union a 43-37 lead entering the fourth.

Murphy trimmed the Panther lead to two points but McCombs and Rowe each knocked down a trey from the wing. Dylan Coyne snared an offensive board and scored, and Odom hit two from the



James Rowe came up one rebound short of another double-double. The senior scored 17 points with 9 boards. Photo/Todd Forrest



Junior Dylan Coyne comes up with one of many loose balls. Coyne finished with 6 rebounds and 4 steals. The Panther forward contributes more than what shows up on the stat sheet. Photo/Todd Forrest

stripe, converting off a 10-0 Panther run.

Leading 53-45 with 2:59 to play, the Murphy coach was whistled for a technical foul, resulting in two more free throws from Odom and two from Coyne. Rowe sank two from the stripe giving Union a 14-point cushion at 59-45 with 1:53 remaining. Rowe added another free throw at the 1:06 mark, putting the Dogs away for good at 60-47.

"We got a big win going into Region play," Union County Coach David Tucker said. "We hung in there and showed some discipline, and it was just a good win."

McCombs finished with 16 points and Rowe added 9 boards, 4 assists, and 2 steals to compliment his 17-point performance. Coyne went for 4 points, 6 boards, 4 steals, and 3 assists, while Danek scored 2 points and blocked a shot.

"This is a tough place to

Lady Panthers smother Murphy

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Murphy, NC - The Union County Lady Panthers (9-4) used a 26-5 second quarter to pull away from the Murphy Lady Bulldogs by a score of 55-25 last Thursday.

Union County trailed 9-5 after one quarter but blew things open thanks to 13-straight points to open the second. Sophomore Brooke Maddox got things started with a steal and score, then two free throws from Jeanelle Arnold tied things up at 9-9. Lauren Zollinger gave Union a lead that it would never relinquish with a driving lay in. Maddox followed that up with a trey, then another bucket from Zollinger, and Shawna Brown's put back had Union County ahead 18-9 with 4:28 to play in the half.

The Lady Panther onslaught wasn't finished as Arnold scored off a steal, Zollinger drove the lane for a bucket, then converted 2-of-2 from the line, Arnold scored off another Murphy turnover, then a Carly Adams lay up and a trey from Kaitlyn Day put Union in the driver's seat with a 31-14 halftime lead.

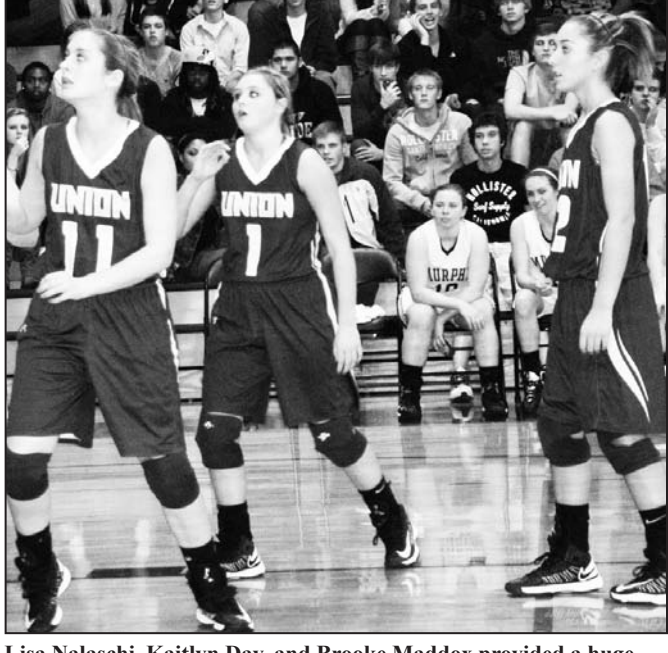
Adams grabbed an offensive board early in the third quarter for a quick deuce, Zollinger drilled a trey, and a 2-pointer giving Union a 38-15 advantage with 3:12 left in the third quarter.

Sophomore Lisa Nalасhi knocked down a trey and scored a basket in the paint for Union's final five points of the quarter and a 43-17 lead entering the fourth.

A Hannah Hughes jumper opened the fourth quarter, the senior then followed that up with a corner trey. A Zollinger trey with 4:18 to play was the final nail in the coffin as Coach David Tucker turned to his bench.

Maddox opened up a 30-point lead with a lay in at the 1:39 mark, Nalасhi went to work in the paint for two more at the 1:14 mark for a 55-23 Union lead.

"This is a tough place to



Lisa Nalасhi, Kaitlyn Day, and Brooke Maddox provided a huge spark for the Lady Panthers by combining for 17 points off the Union County bench. Photo/Todd Forrest



Senior Shawna Brown blocks a Lady Bulldog shot attempt during the second half of Union's win. Photo/Todd Forrest

play because you know Murphy will give it all their all," Tucker said. "You have to be ready to play over here and we were. We had a lot of people step forward and play good tonight."

Nalасhi scored a career-high 7 points and blocked a shot. Zollinger led all scorers with 18 points to go along with 4 assists and 4 steals. Arnold had 7 points, 7 rebounds, and 3

steals, Maddox also went for 7 points and 3 steals, and Hughes added 6 points.

Adams scored 4 points and grabbed 7 boards, Brown finished with 3 points, 9 rebounds, 4 steals, and 3 blocked shots, while Day chipped in 3 points.

The Lady Panthers finished with six treys and shot 7-10 from the charity stripe.