

Sports

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Lynch goes off on Greene; 7-0 Panthers visit No. 5 Rabun on Friday

Junior running back's 192 yards leads Union offense to 49 points, 464 total yards on Homecoming

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The 9th ranked Panthers improved to 7-0 and are one win away from matching the 1977-78 senior class as the winningest class in team history following a 49-28 victory over Greene County in a contest that saw junior running back Bo Lynch rush for a career high 192 yards and two scores as the Union County offense shredded the Tiger defense with 327 yards on the ground.

Apparently Greene brings out the best in Lynch as his last 100-yard game came in Greensboro, exactly 364 days ago. Although, this time around, he far exceeded his 108 yard game from 2014.

Now, with Greene out of the way, the chess board is set for the rematch with Rabun County.

For the second straight year, Head Coach Brian Allison and the Panthers will put their unbeaten record on the line when they travel to rival Rabun County on Friday. Unlike last year's meeting, both teams enter Friday ranked in the Top 10 as the Wildcats currently sit at No. 5 in the Atlanta Journal Constitution's Class AA State rankings.

However, last Friday, Union County wasn't guilty of looking ahead to Rabun as they dominated Greene County for four quarters. The Panthers, led by Lynch, and senior quarterback Joseph Mancuso, who finished with five touchdowns while also going over the century mark in rushing yardage, jumped out to a 28-7 advantage in the second quarter after the Tigers tied the game at 7-7 during the opening period.

Greene made it interesting with a touchdown in the final minute of the half, then took the second half kickoff and drove 75 yards in 10 plays, capped off by a 2-yard scoring run to make it a 28-21 game with 8:48 left in the third.

"Was I concerned at that point? Yes, I was concerned. That was a 14-point swing from 28-7 to 28-14, but then our offense just stuffed it and drove their throats and drove right down field." Coach Allison said

It was all Union from that point on as they scored the next 21 points to put the game away.



Bo Lynch (#5) follows lineman Tyler McConnell as he picks up another big gain vs Greene County. Photo/Todd Forrest



They may not have performed but the UCHS band were some of the loudest Panthers supporters at the game on Friday. Photo/Todd Forrest

The Panthers, who were hosting homecoming, responded with a 67-yard scoring drive that was highlighted by a 4th-and-3 conversion from midfield that kept the drive alive.

From their own 33, Union opened the drive with a 1-yard loss but Mancuso and senior wide out Sam Gilbert hooked up for 12 yards. Two plays later, the Panthers were looking at a 3rd-and-3 but Mancuso was stopped for a no gain bringing up fourth down.

On the 4th-and-3 play, Lynch took a handoff and plowed his way forward for 5-yards behind the right side of his offensive line.

"I knew that we didn't stop them on their last drive and we needed our offense to prove a point," said Coach Allison when asked about the deci-

sion. "Simply, I just thought we needed the first down."

With new life awarded to the drive, Lynch carried for 6 more yards and Mancuso hit junior receiver Slade Thompson for 13. Following two carries and a first down by Mancuso, Thompson hauled in another pass, this time for 9 yards, moving his team into the redzone.

A first down run by Mancuso had Union on the 12-yard line but a sack dropped them back 6 yards. A 15-yard completion to senior Josh Daniel was nullified by an ineligible receiver penalty, putting the Panthers into a 2nd-and-21. However a pass interference was called against Greene when Gilbert was held up on a would-be touchdown catch. Mancuso



Coach Allison addresses the team following their win. The Panthers are now three wins away from a perfect season and an 8-AA Region title. Photo/Todd Forrest



Zach Stone and Tyler McCoy lead the way on a first half tackle. Despite giving up TD drives early in each half, the Panther defense was remained aggressive vs Greene's speed. Photo/Todd Forrest

then converted the first down and one play later, he cashed in from six yards out to stretch the lead back to 14 points at 35-21 with 2:17 left in the third.

With Greene beginning their ensuing drive with horrible field position at the 11-yard line, Daniel jumped a deep out route and took the Tiger pass down the far sideline until he was tripped up at the 2-yard line.

Lynch punched it in on the first play and Union was starting to pull away at 42-21.

As the third quarter came to a close, the Panthers defense forced a three-and-out and a punt and the offense took over at midfield.

On play one, Thompson took another Mancuso pass and gained 12. On play two, Lynch gashed the Tigers with

a 39-yard touchdown carry, delivering the nail in the coffin with 11:43 left and extending the Panthers' advantage to 49-21.

An interception by senior corner back Eddie Kemp allowed Union's offense to melt the majority of the fourth quarter clock and the Tigers' offense wouldn't sniff the field until the 3:35 mark of the game.

The Panthers would surrender a garbage touchdown with 56 seconds left that made it a 49-28 final score.

Greene's only bright spot on the evening was junior All-Region running back Devin Wynn, who racked up the majority of his team's 254 rushing yards. However, losing the turnover battle 3-0 and allowing 300-plus yards on the ground and 464 yards of total offense is not going to result in too many victories.

The Tigers won the coin toss and elected to defer to the second half.

It backfired. Daniel took the game's opening kickoff from the goal line and returned it 54 yards to the Greene 45-yard line. From there, Mancuso's right arm wasn't put to use until just under 50 seconds left in the quarter as the success of the Panthers' running attack came as a surprise, even to their head coach.

"We wanted the ball (to start the game)," Coach Allison said. "I didn't want to start us in a hole and I thought we could score on them but I didn't realize we were going to run the football the way we did. We ran it right down their throats."

On the first play from scrimmage, junior Zach Stone took an end around for 10 yards, Lynch picked up 9 yards on the ground, Mancuso tacked on nine more before Stone took another end around for 7 yards. An offside on the Tigers moved Union to the 3-yard line and Mancuso punched it in from there for the first score of the game.

Greene responded with a steady dose of Wynn and it turned out to be just what the doctor ordered for the visitors. Carries for 10, 7, 5, 20, and 20 yards again by the junior had the Tigers on the Union 7-yard line with a 1st-and-goal.

But the Panthers' D would buckle down and stuff Wynn for a short gain. On second down, Greene went back to the Wynn-well one more time and this time, a pitch sweep was forced back inside by junior linebacker Nic Rodriguez, allowing sophomore D-lineman Matthew Beise to deliver a bone-jarring hit and drive Wynn to the turf for a 2-yard loss.

"We didn't tackle quite

as well as I wanted us to, but we weren't bad," Coach Allison said. "I knew they (could run the football successfully) and I knew it would take us a touch to adjust to their speed because we can't practice that."

On third down, quarterback Henry Neal tossed a fade to All-Region wide out Jalen Edwards, who came down with the pigskin for six points.

"I was a little worried when they drove the ball right down the field but I also knew that it would take us a little time to adjust," Coach Allison said.

Tied at 7-all and starting from the 22-yard line, Mancuso continued to move the chains with his legs. The senior QB carried for 11 yards on the first play and later gained 12 and 14 yards before connected with sophomore Cole Wright for a 5-yard touchdown strike on 4th-and-goal at the five.

During the drive, Lynch joined Mancuso with some big gains of his own (10, 16, and 5 yards) and formed the deadly 1-2 punch that delivered body blow after body blow to the Tigers all night before connecting with the knockout blow 54 ticks into the fourth quarter.

The TD pass to Wright was the Panthers' first pass play of the game, and it came on a critical 4th down play where the Greene County secondary, forced to respect Mancuso's running ability, bit on a QB roll out and Mancuso showed some touch by dropping the pass in behind the defensive backs to an open Wright in the back corner of the endzone.

The Tigers' next possession was handcuffed by a holding penalty, and on 3rd-and-22, the Panther coaching staff dialed up a corner blitz and Kemp sprinted untouched into the backfield, forcing Neal to let go of a screen pass before it had time to develop and senior Chris Drost and junior Chandler Day were both waiting to break up the throw.

Union County fielded the punt and set up shop with excellent field position at the 47-yard line.

On 3rd-and-8, Thompson lined up in the slot and hauled in his first catch since missing the previous three games following an appendectomy prior to the Fannin County game. Thompson's grab was good for 21 yards and was set up by another roll out by Mancuso that drew the attention of three Tiger defenders, allowing Thompson plenty of real estate to roam free. Lynch got in on the action with consecutive runs going for 17 and 8 yards that moved the offense inside the 5-yard line. One play later, with Lynch leading the way,

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Lady Panthers finish second in Region 8-AA

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Social Circle - After Saturday's Region 8-AA Championship game was postponed due to weather, Union County and Social Circle finally squared off Monday afternoon and the Lady Redskins were victorious 2-0.

No further information is available at this time. The Lady Panthers will host the first round of the State Tournament beginning on Wednesday at a time yet to be determined.

The Lady Panthers (21-6) secured their spot in the 8-AA Region Championship Game for the fifth time in six years following a two-game sweep of the visiting Washington Wilkes Lady Tigers (20-11).

Thee sweep also guaranteed Union County the right to host the first round of the Class AA State Tournament - something they've also accomplished five times in six years.

The third-seeded Lady Tigers overpowered sixth-seeded Greene County 13-0 and 15-0 in the first round of the 8-AA playoffs to punch their ticket to Blairsville for a showdown with second-seeded Union in the Region Semifinals.

The Lady Panthers, who received a bye in the first round, were perhaps a tad rusty following a 13-day lay-off, but by the time the second game rolled around, the lineup found a groove and dropped a baker's dozen on the visitors in a 13-0 rout that was called after six innings.

The first game saw Wil-



Kendra Tanner comes through for the Lady Panthers during their Semifinal sweep of Washington-Wilkes. Photo/Todd Forrest

kes strike first but Union County pulled away by a score of 5-1.

Junior Laken Chambers recorded a win from the circle in both games, making her the second pitcher in team history to win 50 games. She also drove in four runs in game two and her five hits on the day give her 106 for her career - seventh most in team history. She also becomes the first player in Union County fast pitch history to win 50 games and reach 100 hits in a career.

Lady Panthers 5 Washington Wilkes 1

Union County freshman Ellie Garrison finished 2-for-3 at the plate with 2 RBIs

that included a two-out RBI triple down the left field line that scored fellow 9th grader Aladriel Arnold and tied the game at 1-1 in the bottom of the second inning.

Meanwhile, Chambers settled down after the first inning and pitched a complete game, 2-hitter with 7 strikeouts.

The Lady Panthers put up three more runs in the third off five straight base hits that began with Nix, Chambers, and sophomore Jillian Lawn reaching on consecutive one-out singles to load the bases. Senior Maddie Garrett followed with her team's fourth straight single, scoring Nix and putting Union on top.

Junior Lydia Arrowood singled up the middle to score

freshman courtesy runner Maddie Sutton. Lawn would later score on a passed ball.

Leading 4-1, the Lady Panthers tacked on one more in the sixth when Arnold singled and Garrison doubled with one out. Arnold scored her second run of the contest when sophomore Braden Potteete brought her home on a grounder to first base.

In the top of the seventh, Chambers allowed a one-out base hit but she struck out the next batter swinging and got a line out to junior Kendra Tanner at shortstop.

All five of the Union runs were brought in by the bottom half of the lineup. Garrett and Arrowood each finished 1-for-3 with an RBI. Arnold was 1-for-2 with 2 runs and an RBI.

Nix finished with a 1-for-3 day, Chambers went 2-for-2 with a walk, and Lawn was 1-for-2.

Lady Panthers 13 Washington Wilkes 0

When the first three hitters in your lineup finish with three hits a-piece, that usually means that good things are going to happen, and that was the case in Union's 13-0 win over Washington Wilkes.

Tanner went 3-for-4 with 4 runs, Nix was 3-for-4 with 3 RBIs, and Chambers finished 3-for-4 with 4 RBIs. Lawn, Garrett, and Arrowood also drove in a run each and that was more than enough for Chambers to get the W.

The senior right hander surrendered 4 hits in over 6 innings, while fanning four in her 15th win of the season and 51st of her career.

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