

Panthers!!!

Panthers top Wheeler, Chattco to advance to state title game

By Len Robbins
Publisher

For the first time in 37 years, the Clinch County Panther basketball team will be playing for a state championship.

The Panthers defeated Chattahoochee County Friday afternoon at the Fort Valley State gymnasium, 53-44, in the Class A, Division II semifinals to advance to the championship, which will be played on Thursday, March 12, at 3 p.m. at the Macon Coliseum against Portal (26-5).

Clinch (28-4) and Chattahoochee (27-2) were tied at halftime, 23-23. In the last two quarters, Clinch's Kamarion Johnson pumped in 12 points (for a game-high 22), while Traviian Miller had 11 (15 for the game), as Clinch twice built nine-point leads against the top-ranked team in the classification. Terrence George's Panthers defeated Wheeler County in Alamo Wednesday 65-59 to advance to the semifinals at Fort Valley.

Friday against Chattco, Clinch jumped out to an 8-0 lead as Jakyri Posley hit two three-pointers at the start of the contest.

Chattahoochee (also the Panthers) battled back, taking a 16-13 lead early in the second period. Clinch kept it tight until halftime, when the teams were knotted at 23-23.

The Panthers started to pull ahead in the third quarter, going up by nine, 33-24, on a steal and slam by Traviian Miller with 4:27 left in the third period. The lead hovered under nine for most of the remainder of the game, with Chattco cutting it to two, 44-42, with 4:53 to go. Clinch led by six, 40-34, going into the fourth quarter.

Kamarion Johnson was named the game's MVP, as he scored 22. Miller had 15 points, while Polsey had 11. Kyiis Mingo added two points, and Fred Causey had 1.

"We knew coming into the game that we wanted to spend our defensive effort on their #3 (Champ Simpson)," George said of his team's strategy against Chattahoochee. "He's



carried them all year long. He got in foul trouble early and that kept him at bay, and our guys did a good job on defense and taking care of the ball."

Clinch also was stellar from the free throw line, going 9-of-13 from the charity stripe Friday. The game before, against Wheeler County, Clinch was 50 percent (16-of-32) from the free throw line.

Other than the free throws, Wednesday's game in Alamo was similar, with Clinch leading most of the way, but the opponent keeping within striking distance.

Clinch led 18-14 after one quarter against Wheeler, but the Bulldogs tied it up shortly after at 18-18. Clinch pushed their lead to five, 28-23, at intermission.

The Bulldogs cut that Clinch lead to three late in the third quarter due to turnovers, but Clinch finished the period strong for a seven-point advantage, 47-40, going into the fourth.

In the fourth, Clinch pushed that lead to 11 with 3:45 remaining, eventually winning by six.

Posley and Johnson paced the Panthers with 16 points while Miller added 14 and Mingo had 10 along with over a dozen rebounds. DeMarco Simon hit two critical three-pointers in the game, and Shane Burns

had 2 points and Fred Causey had 1.

"Our strategy with Wheeler was similar to Chattahoochee. They had one outstanding player (Tyree Travis), and we

focused on stopping him," said George. "We were able to get him in foul trouble, and that kept him on the bench, which was a key to that game."

Panther state hoops championship history

Thursday will be sixth time the Clinch County Panthers have played in a state championship game. Below are capsules of the previous five appearances.

1961

Coach: Charlie Bennett
Record: 27-2
Result: Fort Valley 65, Clinch County 44

1962

Coach: Charlie Bennett
Record: 23-5
Result: Perry 77, Clinch County 45

1976

Coach: Austin Deloach
Record: 27-3
Lost to Woodbury 75-57. Both the Panthers and Pantherettes made the finals, with the Pantherettes winning the title

1987

Coach: Allen Robbins
Record: 25-5
Result: Clinch County 67, Greater Atlanta Christian 65

Both the Panthers and Pantherettes won state titles in 1987 - the first time a school had both boys and girls champions in the same year since 1972, and it didn't happen again until 2006.

1989

Coach: Allen Robbins
Result: Clinch County 65, Richmond Hill 55
Part of Clinch County's High "Triple Crown" - state titles in football, boys basketball and baseball in same school year.



Pictured above is Clinch's Jakyri Posley going up for two against Wheeler County. At left is Clinch's Shane Burns reacting to a call during the game - Photos by Joy Sumner Photography.

GOOD LUCK TO THE PANTHERS!

Dairy Queen

342 S. Church Street
Homerville



Grill & Chill

OPEN LATE AFTER ALL HOME GAMES!

Mon.-Thur. 10:30 a.m.-10 p.m.
Fri.-Sat. 10:30 a.m.-10:30 p.m.
Sun. 11:30-10 P.M.

Go Panthers!

Proud Supporters of Clinch County High



LEECONTAINER

Our Containers. Your Success.

we support your team.
because well, it's our team too.

simple human sense



Lutz, Brown, Peagler & Manley
INSURANCE AGENCY

28 E. Dame Avenue • Homerville
Call us at 912-487-5411

Auto-Owners
INSURANCE

We're Pulling for the Panthers!

ROUNDTREE FUNERAL HOME
'Service with Dignity & Honor'

240 East Dame Avenue
Homerville
912-487-5325

GOOD LUCK TO THE CLINCH COUNTY PANTHERS!
ROLL RED ROLL!

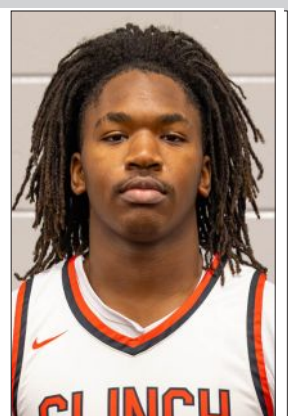
From your friends at
CONNER HOLDINGS Only Love!

CLINCH FITNESS CENTER

We offer personal training and tanning
Call Larry at (912) 387-9092

The Subway Basketball Player of the Week is **Kyiis Mingo**. **Kyiis Mingo** had 10 key points and over a dozen rebounds Wednesday against Wheeler County in the state quarterfinals.

Congrats, **Kyiis**, from your fans at...



SUBWAY

23 West Dame Avenue in Homerville
912-487-3894