

CAVALIER GRIDDERSTROUNCE RIPLEY 42-21



Above: Gabe Dupree (29) and Carson Pruitt (34) prepare to lower the boom on Ripley quarterback Sammie Smith.

By Ron Barry

Considering how blazing hot everyone and everything was in Ripley this past Friday night, perhaps it shouldn't have been surprising when a few tempers flared near the end of Crockett County's football game there.

But nothing burned hotter than the wrath of Cavalier Coach Kevin Ward toward his team at the contest's conclusion, after a brief skirmish had broken out on the field following Crockett's fifth touchdown of an eventual 42-21 thrashing of the host Tigers.

"That is not who we are. That is not who we will ever be," Ward told his squad as it gathered near the south end zone of Tiny Knee Stadium. The veteran mentor was addressing some shoving near the middle of the line of scrimmage and a bevy of officials' flags with 3:25 remaining as Caden "Deuce" Greenhill was cruising untouched into the right side of the end zone after a sweep.



Above: Carson Pruitt (34) rambles behind the blocking of Preston Vernon (50) to gain 28 yards on his first carry of the season.

With most eyes on Greenhill scoring his second touchdown of the night, few saw what happened in the center of the line. Whatever it was (and we'll leave it at that), four or five Tigers were going after Crockett's Carson Pruitt while some of the Cavs stepped in to defend him and others were trying to serve as peacemakers. Unfortunately, a couple of Cav reserves came running onto the field from the bench area, which is cause for an automatic ejection by TSSAA rules.

Officials restored order quickly, no one got hurt, and both teams were on the field praying together at the game's conclusion, but Ward made it crystal clear to his Cavaliers that he would not tolerate any similar behavior as the season goes on.

"I don't know when I've ever been more disappointed in a win," he told them. "Don't get me wrong; a win is always a good thing in sports. But all of you know better than this – you've been taught better than this. And this is not the kind of thing we are going to be known for." Many of those listening to his speech felt – appropriately – that it was the real victory of the night.

But there was a game played before it, albeit delayed by more than an hour from its original starting time as officials waited for the searing heat of the day – at one point Friday recording a heat index of 112 degrees – to finally reach "a less dangerous level."

Once it did (if it did), Crockett completely dominated the opening half as the Cavs welcomed back assistant coach and offensive coordinator David Barker, still recovering from the loss of his 16-year-old daughter Reese in an auto accident two weeks prior. The Ripley field bore a pair of painted-on ribbons with Reese's name in her honor on the Cav side, a nice gesture by the hosts.

While the Cavs were forced to punt on their opening possession, linebacker Preston Lambert sacked Ripley quarterback Sammie Smith on his first pass attempt of the night as Crockett quickly got the ball back after a Tiger punt to the Cav 41. Several solid running plays set up an option keeper by quarterback Grayson Lambert, who dashed the final 24 yards for a score, dragging a defender who had grabbed his jersey for the final five yards. Avery Hurst booted the extra point, and the visitors led 7-0 with 1:44 left in the opening period.

After another Ripley punt, downed at the Crockett 35, the Cavs threw in some new offensive wrinkles that featured Pruitt, who never touched the ball in the season opening 39-15 win over Jackson North Side. On this 65-yard drive, however, Pruitt caught an 18-yard pass and broke a 27-yard run to set up his own scoring blast from a yard out. Hurst's extra made it 14-0 with 5:33 remaining in the half.

Not long after, Crockett's Demo Pickens lived up to his name, picking off a Smith pass and returning it 34 yards to the Ripley 36. Grayson Lambert, who completed his first five passes to five different receivers, covered the final 29 yards with a rollout toss to Antuan Hobson in the right side of the end zone with just 42 seconds left. Hurst kicked the extra for a 21-0 edge at the intermission.

Crockett's defense held the Tigers to a total of 52 yards in the first half – but things turned around rather abruptly when the teams took the field for the third quarter. Ripley pulled off a pair of 59-yard touchdown drives in the period, with Marjay Barbee and Smith tallying on short runs, and suddenly it was 21-14. The Tigers outgained the Cavs 123 to 21 in total yardage in the third period.

But in this Jekyll-and-Hyde game, the momentum switched yet again when Crockett's Joseph Gould, punting from his own 39, was roughed by the charging Ripley defense. The resulting 15-yard penalty retained possession for the Cavs, who then drove it the remaining 49 yards behind solid runs by Gabe Dupree and quarterback Lambert. Greenhill took it the final 13 yards for the touchdown, and a two-point conversion pass from Lambert to Hobson made it 29-14 Cavs with 7:47 to play.

The host Tigers still had a chance, however, after Smith connected with Josh Hearn on a 40-yard pass play to set up a three-yard scoring run by the Ripley quarterback. The extra point made it 29-21 Crockett with 4:53 remaining.

The backbreaker for Ripley came when, on the next two plays from scrimmage, Greenhill broke off runs of 19 and 55 yards. On the latter, he was pushed out of bounds at the Tiger 6, right next to where the corner of the asphalt track surrounding the field actually cuts through the left end zone corner. Greenhill's cleats hit the track and he slid completely across it like skater Nancy Kerrigan before crashing into a ravine on the outside of the track. He had to be pulled out by trainer Carah-Beth Beck and some law enforcement officers, but returned to the field to score on a four-yard sweep with 3:25 remaining when the skirmish broke out after the run.

The outcome was settled for good when Jordan Rainey pounced on a Smith fumble on the very next play from scrimmage. Shortly thereafter, freshman running back Dakylan Woods – like Pruitt, carrying for the first time this season – gained seven, two, and finally 28 yards on three runs to reach the end zone with 1:05 to go. Hurst's extra provided the final of 42-21.

Greenhill ran for 189 yards in 23 carries and Lambert completed seven of his 11 passes for 92 yards to pace Crockett's statistical leaders.

Ward's club (now 2-0) returns home to host Lexington (1-1) this week in a 7:00 p.m. contest Friday night.

Final Statistics

Rushes-Yards: CC – Deuce Greenhill 23-189, Gabe Dupree 7-50, Dakylan Woods 3-37, Grayson Lambert 4-33, Carson Pruitt 3-28, Demo Pickens 1-(-1), **Team 41-336.**

RIP – Vernon Thompson 10-69, Sammie Smith 10-31, Demarcus Barnes 8-28, Marjay Barbee 3-22, Omarion Pitts 5-22, **Team 36-172.**

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC – G. Lambert 7-11-92-0. **RIP** – Smith 3-11-91-1.

Receptions-Yards: CC – Antuan Hobson 1-29, Willie Walker 2-21, Pruitt 1-18, Amarion Hobson 1-10, Demo Pickens 1-8, Preston Lambert 1-6. **RIP** – Josh Hearn 2-57, JaQarrius Hurdle 1-34.

Interceptions: Demo Pickens 1-34.

Total Yards: CC 428, RIP 263.

First Downs: CC 16, RIP 13.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 0-0, RIP 4-1.

Penalties-Yards: CC 8-57, RIP 6-45.

Punts-Yards: CC Joseph Gould 2-68, **RIP** 2-72.

Season Statistics (2 Games; Record 2-0)

Rushes-Yards: CC – Deuce Greenhill 39-337, Gabe Dupree 17-153, Dakylan Woods 3-37, Carson Pruitt 3-28, Grayson Lambert 10-28, Demo Pickens 3-6, **Team 75-589. Opponents 74-331.**

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC – G. Lambert 10-16-142-0. **Opponents 12-32-227-2.**

Receptions-Yards: CC – Preston Lambert 2-40, Antuan Hobson 2-39, Willie Walker 3-27, Carson Pruitt 1-18, Amarion Hobson 1-10, Demo Pickens 1-8. **Opponents 12-227.**

Interceptions: Demo Pickens 2-34.

Total Yards: CC 731, Opponents 558.

First Downs: CC 25, Opponents 27.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 2-1, Opponents 10-5.

Penalties-Yards: CC 11-81, Opponents 14-97.

Punts-Yards: CC – Joseph Gould 4-153, **Opponents 4-93.**

Points Scored: CC 81, Opponents 36.



Left: Ripley honored the memory of Reese Barker with ribbons on the field.



Above: Crockett quarterback Grayson Lambert (1), escorted by twin brother Preston (13), gallops toward the end zone for a Cav touchdown.



Above: It was so hot before the game that players (Preston Lambert is shown here) warmed up without pads and helmets.



Above: Deuce Greenhill (0) tries to escape a jersey grab as teammates Carson Pruitt (34), Kevin Garduno (74), Joseph Gould (71), and Jordan Rainey (70) provide blocking.



Above: One of Crockett's MVPs in the oppressive heat was athletic trainer Carah-Beth Beck, shown here working a cramp out of the leg of receiver Willie Walker (6).



Left: Antuan Hobson (2) celebrates his second-quarter touchdown reception with quarterback Grayson Lambert (1) and Amarion Hobson (4).



Left: A Cavalier cheerleader tries to cool off in front of the sideline mist fan.



Above: Offensive coordinator David Barker was back on the sidelines for Crockett as #LiveLikeReese signs and bracelets surrounded the game.

Below: Crockett's cheer squad waits out the opening delay of Friday's game, which didn't begin until about 8:20 because of the heat index.



Above: Freshman Dakylan Woods (32) scored the game's final touchdown for the Cavaliers.

