

# FOOTBALL SEASON ENDS DUE TO A TROJAN HORSE



**Above:** Grayson Lambert (1), with blocking support from Ethan Allen (55), fires a rollout pass. Lambert completed 11 of 18 throws for 115 yards and a touchdown in the playoff.



**Above:** Deuce Greenhill's 61-yard touchdown gallop on the game's first play from scrimmage had the Crockett crowd buzzing.

## By Ron Barry

When a football team has a player that is so good he could have two memorable nicknames, that team is in a great position. Such is the case in Millington, Tennessee.

So take your pick: "The Trojan Horse" or "The Real McCoy."

The player in question is Millington quarterback McCoy Pugh, a strong senior leader whom the Trojans ride until the final horn sounds – he is, indeed, a Trojan horse. It's entirely fitting.

But there was once a famous Canadian inventor, born in 1844, known for many of his creations, including the lawn sprinkler and the ironing board. His name was Elijah McCoy, and his inventions were so good that other companies produced copies of them, but couldn't duplicate their quality. So if you wanted the "real" thing, you'd say, "Make sure it's a real McCoy."

Let it be said that McCoy Pugh is very much the real thing.

Millington's southpaw field general lit up Crockett County's defense for 336 total yards in Friday night's opening round of the TSSAA State 4-A playoffs, running for 201 yards and throwing for another 135, to account for all five of his team's touchdowns as the Trojans edged the Cavaliers 38-34, ending the season for Coach Kevin Ward's club.

Yet even in defeat, while disappointed in the outcome, Ward was upfront in his appreciation of the entire season of effort put in by his Cavalier gridders.

"This team has faced some difficult situations all year," he said, alluding most specifically to the loss of team manager Reese Barker (daughter of assistant coach David Barker) at the season's start and more recently the death of Chris Rigby (father of assistant coach Will Rigby). "They have supported their coaches in times of trial; they have given their best efforts even when circumstances were going against them. This group of seniors has provided great leadership and has built a great foundation for this program moving forward for the rest of the players. I am disappointed that we just didn't get it done tonight (Friday), but I am so proud of them and I still believe we're as good as any West Tennessee team that's still alive in the playoffs."

Keeping the Cavs from "getting it done" Friday night was the play of Pugh, who has kept enough defenses from getting it done that Millington is now 9-2 and headed to Brownsville this coming week to face Haywood in Round 2 of the post-season tournament. He ran the ball 25 times – three times for touchdowns – and completed four of nine passes for two more scores. Most importantly, he kept the ball in the Trojans' possession considerably longer than Crockett had it, negating a Cav offense that was clicking more often than it wasn't.

Things were looking rosy for the visitors early on when Crockett's Demo Pickens returned the opening kickoff 34 yards and then, on the first play from scrimmage, Deuce Greenhill took it to the house from 61 yards away just 23 seconds into the game. Avery Hurst's extra point made it 7-0, Crockett.

Pugh, on a third-and-eight on Millington's first series, broke a 60-yard run on his initial carry of the night to set up a 35-yard field goal by Chase Michael, cutting the Cavs' advantage to 7-3 with 7:26 remaining in the opening period.

Millington then forced a Cavalier punt on the next possession, but Crockett's Joseph Gould rolled it dead at the Trojan one with a 56-yard boot. Undaunted, Pugh ran for 13 yards out of his own end zone to convert a third-and-11 situation and then broke free for 55 yards three plays later. With 2:47 left in the first, he then bulled his way into the end zone from three yards out. Michael's extra made it 10-7, Millington.

A third-down sack for a 13-yard loss doomed Crockett's next series, costing the Cavs serious field position. Following a Gould punt, Pugh took to the air and burned the secondary with a 32-yard touchdown pass to JyShawn Anderson, and suddenly it was 17-7 before the quarter had ended.

But Ward's squad responded with a 73-yard scoring drive, highlighted by runs of 14 and 12 yards by quarterback Grayson Lambert, a 12-yard pass to Pickens, and an 18-yard spurt by Greenhill. Pickens got the tally on an eight-yard sweep of right end, and Hurst's extra point put Crockett back in it at 17-14.

The comeback was short-lived. The hosts bounced right back and marched 79 yards for another score, converting a fourth-down inside their own territory before Pugh and Anderson connected for a 68-yard touchdown throw. Michael's kick made it 24-14, Trojans with 5:46 remaining until halftime.

The killer for Crockett came on the opening drive of the third quarter. Millington took it 66 yards for a score, taking advantage of two Cav penalties and converting three third- or fourth-down plays, all on runs by Pugh. The senior signal-caller bulled into the end zone from a yard out, having taken seven minutes off the clock, and the Trojans held a 31-14 edge.

Still, Crockett fought back. Lambert hit Greenhill for a 32-yard pass completion and found Antuan Hobson for 13 more yards to the Millington 29. Following a few incompletions and a Trojan penalty, freshman Dakylan Woods took a handoff from 13 yards out and dragged three tacklers in for a score. Hurst's extra cut it to 31-21 with 2:25 to go in the third.

Hurst then executed a perfectly placed onside kick that bounced off a Millington player and was recovered by Lambert at the Trojan 34. Crockett converted a fourth-down play when Greenhill took a direct snap from center Gould and raced 16 yards to the 12. One play later, he took another snap and handed it to Hobson on a counter to the left side. The senior's first carry of the season resulted in a 10-yard touchdown, and it was suddenly 31-28 with 16 seconds remaining in the third period.

From that point, however, Crockett's defense could not contain the Trojans. Most damaging was a long run by Cam Puryear, who had suspiciously been "injured" on the sideline making a tackle on the Cavs' previous possession. Requiring the "help" of two assistant coaches - and taking about two minutes - to baby-step "walk" all the way back across the field, he suddenly reappeared with the speed to blaze 52 yards down to the Crockett 14.

Pugh scored from three yards away soon thereafter, boosting the hosts' advantage to 38-28 with 8:42 remaining.

The resilient Cavaliers responded again with another touchdown on a 78-yard march highlighted by passes from Lambert to his brother Preston for 22 yards and a pair to Willie Walker covering the final 21 yards. The extra point was blocked when Millington appeared to be decidedly offside, but no call resulted and the score stood at 38-34 with 6:09 to go. Crockett never got the ball back. Pugh found Puryear for a 29-yard third-down killer on the first series, and then began handing off to Jaydon Williams, whom the Cavs had held to nine yards on 12 carries in the previous three quarters. But he gained 57 yards on six tries in the fourth, and the Millington ball possession ended the contest.

It was Crockett's first playoff appearance since the seniors were freshmen. The Cavs finished at 6-5 for the year. Greenhill's 1,376 yards rushing and 23 touchdowns led Crockett's statistics in 2023; he had 116 yards on 11 carries in the playoff finale.

### Final Game Statistics

**Rushes-Yards: CC** - Deuce Greenhill 11-116, Demo Pickens 4-29, Grayson Lambert 6-20, Dakylan Woods 2-15, Antuan Hobson 1-10, Amarion Hobson 1-3, **Team 25-198. MILL** - McCoy Pugh 25-201, Cam Puryear 5-78, Jaydon Williams 18-66, JyShawn Anderson 1-3, Chase Michael 1-(-9), **Team 50-339.**

**Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC** - G. Lambert 11-18-115-0. **MILL** - Pugh 4-9-135-0.

**Receptions-Yards: CC** - Greenhill 2-31, Preston Lambert 2-27, Antuan Hobson 3-23, Willie Walker 2-21, Pickens 2-13. **MILL** - Anderson 3-106, Puryear 1-29.

**Interceptions: CC** - None. **MILL** - None.

**Total Yards: CC 313, MILL 474.**

**First Downs: CC 13, MILL 15.**

**Fumbles-Lost: CC 0-0, MILL 3-1.**

**Penalties-Yards: CC 4-33, MILL 13-86.**

**Punts-Yards: CC 3-119, MILL 1-28.**



**Above:** Deuce Greenhill (0) cuts behind a block by Noah Fitzhugh (9) on a sweep of the right side. Greenhill scored 23 touchdowns and rushed for 1,376 yards for the season.



**Above:** No fewer than nine Cav defenders are in on this stop of Millington runner Jaydon Williams: Antuan Hobson (2), Preston Lambert (13), Kentravion Price (57), Zerafin Guardian (76), Jacob Knox (buried beneath Price and Guardian), Gabe Dupree (29), Willie Walker (6), Dakylan Woods (32), and Amarion Hobson (4).

### Final Season Statistics (11 Games; Record 6-5; Region 2-2)

**Rushes-Yards: CC** - Deuce Greenhill 178-1,376, Dakylan Woods 41-269, Grayson Lambert 85-230, Gabe Dupree 30-220, Demo Pickens 24-191, Carson Pruitt 5-31, Antuan Hobson 1-10, Amarion Hobson 1-3, Ben Burgess 5-3, Demarrius Pickens 3-3, Dylon Pigue 1-1, **Team 374-2,465. Opponents 423-2,549.**

**Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC** - G. Lambert 64-124-1,056-3, Ben Burgess 3-4-11-0, Landon Wicker 1-1-8-0, **Team 68-129-1,075-3. Opponents 75-141-1,112-11.**

**Receptions-Yards: CC** - Deuce Greenhill 10-246, Antuan Hobson 16-225, Willie Walker 12-158, Amarion Hobson 5-153, Preston Lambert 7-129, Demo Pickens 12-109, Carson Pruitt 3-36, Dylon Pigue 1-8, Sam Kalinisan 1-6, Leland Dotson 1-5, **Team 68-1,075. Opponents 75-1,112.**

**Interceptions: CC-** Demo Pickens 4-64, Antuan Hobson 3-64 (1 TD return), Gabe Dupree 2-33, Willie Walker 1-24, Dakylan Woods 1-0, **Team 11-185. Opponents 3-45.**

**Points (TDs-2PC-XP-FG-P):** Greenhill 23-0-0-0-138, Avery Hurst 0-0-39-2-45, Woods 7-1-0-0-44, Demo Pickens 5-0-0-0-30, Dupree 4-0-0-0-24, Antuan Hobson 4-1-0-0-26, Walker 3-0-0-0-18, Preston Lambert 2-1-0-0-14, Grayson Lambert 1-0-0-0-6, Pruitt 1-0-0-0-6, Amarion Hobson 1-0-0-0-6, Pigue 1-0-0-0-6.

**Total Yards: CC 3,387, Opponents 3,545.**

**First Downs: CC 122, Opponents 128.**

**Fumbles-Lost: CC 21-7, Opponents 28-13.**

**Penalties-Yards: CC 39-286, Opponents 75-590.**

**Punts-Yards-Avg: CC** - Joseph Gould 23-918-39.9, **Opponents 25-695-27.8.**

**Points Scored: CC 363, Opponents 247.**



**Above** Demo Pickens (3) has a clear sprint to the end zone for Crockett's second touchdown of the game.



**Below:** While the cheer team's pre-game sign turned out to be a bit too optimistic, it was funny while it lasted.



**Above:** A second-quarter killer play for Millington: quarterback McCoy Pugh (8) gets off this pass before Dakylan Woods can get to him ...



**Above:** Dakylan Woods (32), following the block of Kentravion Price (57), drags a tackler that has a hold of his jersey toward the end zone ...



**Above:** ... and it goes for a 68-yard touchdown to JyShawn Anderson (3), who had slipped behind a corps of Cavalier defenders.



**Above:** ... and then runs over the final three guys himself to score Crockett's third touchdown on a 13-yard run.



**Above:** Crockett athletic trainer Carah-Beth Beck tends to Cav lineman Preston Vernon (50) after a hit near the goal line. She worked her magic and kept him in the game.





**Below:** ... and makes the recovery as Antuan Hobson (2) and Austin Carroll (56) celebrate the turn of events.



**Right:** In the end, though, it was too much McCoy Pugh (8), seen here pitching to Cam Puryear (2) before Gabe Dupree (29) can get a breakup of the play.

**Below:** Antuan Hobson (2) almost picked off this pass, deflecting the ball (upper right corner) away from Trojan receiver Chase Michael (13) as Preston Lambert (13) and Amarion Hobson (4) provide backup.



**Above:** Crockett got back into the game when this onside kick glanced off a Millington receiver who was being hit by Braden Park (27), Dakylan Woods (32), and Preston Lambert (13).

**Below:** As the ball bounces in the direction of Willie Walker (6), Crockett's Grayson Lambert (1) swoops in from the side to take a dive at it ...



**Above:** Preston Lambert (13) and center Joseph Gould (71) signal for a touchdown as Antuan Hobson (2) - on his only carry of the season - takes it in after a direct snap to Deuce Greenhill.

**Left:** Longtime Crockett assistant Kent Scott (left) listens in on the season's final timeout, but the Cavs never got the ball back from Millington.

