

NEW INTENSITY SHINES AS CROCKETT CRUSHES OBION 27-7



Above: The Crockett cheerleaders are forecasting doom for the visiting Obion County Central squad.



Above: Homecoming queen Charity Greenhill is flanked by the remaining members of the court.

By Ron Barry

Preston Vernon and Joseph Gould both needed to wipe their slates clean.

Those two senior Crockett County football linemen had different demons, but the same remedy: a homecoming game victory over Obion County Central, a team that came into Cavalier Stadium averaging 35 points per contest. No current Cav player had experienced a win against an Obion team, having lost the three previous encounters since entering high school. And area “experts” were all picking the Rebels to make it four straight. “For me, it was a revenge game,” said Gould. “I was tired of losing to them.”

An even stronger fuel was burning for Vernon: the stench of last week’s controversial finish in the 19-17 loss to Dyer County in the Region 7-4A opener.

“I couldn’t stop thinking about it all week,” he said. “I know our coaches wanted us to move on, but it was haunting me. I wanted to be sure nothing like that ever happened again to this football team.”

And while the pair differed on their motivational reasons, they both agreed that something happened Friday night that hadn’t previously surfaced.

“Our line played together probably for the first time all season,” Vernon said. “There was an intensity there that’s been missing for some reason, but it came together tonight.”

“We were working together and pulling for each other better than we have been,” Gould echoed. “I think last week’s result had a lot to do with it. We know we should be 2-0 in the region right now.”

Maybe it was the messaging on the homecoming floats they had marched in front of in Thursday night’s parade. Those themes promoted – take your choice – wrangling, rocking, wrecking, or super-smashing the Rebels.

Mission accomplished. Somehow, the spirited Crockett defense held a team that had scorched region-leading Haywood for 57 points to a single touchdown.

Coach Kevin Ward was absolutely thrilled with the effort his team put forth.

“I honestly didn’t know how these guys would respond to the ending from last week’s game with Dyer County,” Ward said. “But I wanted them to leave it all out on the field tonight, to play until they were exhausted. Well, a lot of them LOOK exhausted. Our defensive guys played their tails off, and our offense did well for the most part. We had a few rough spots there, probably should have scored a couple more times in the game, but I’m extremely proud of them.” (Classily, the Cavs had the ball inside the Obion 10 in the game’s final minutes, but Ward ordered the offense to just take a knee and let the clock run out.)

So – how exactly did Ward’s club do something no other team had managed to do? Nobody had kept the Rebels in single digits.

“We played hard,” Ward said. “We followed our assignments, we kept their receivers in front of us, we finished tackles, we only gave up one big play, and we took care of the football when we had it. Doing those things will win football games.”

Ward also credited the cheerleaders, band, and student body for keeping his players energized.

“Those kids were all amazing tonight,” he said. “They kept it up all night, and it definitely helped our team keep getting after it.” The Cavalier Crazies had a “Neon” theme, with many students dressing in the brightest mix of fluorescent colors they could find, and the energy emanating from their section was mesmerizing.

It helped early on in the contest that quarterback Grayson Lambert – who had run the ball only about six times a game on average in the previous six matchups – noticed that the Obion defense seemed keyed on stopping whoever was at running back, especially with Deuce Greenhill in Crockett’s starting lineup. As a result, Lambert kept the ball more himself on option plays, and found success throughout the night, gaining a career-high 77 yards on 15 carries.

“We basically ran the same plays we always have,” he said, “except that I kept the ball more because the holes were there. I think they were set up to try to stop Deuce, so I just kept it more and followed the blocking.”

Offensive coordinator David Barker’s game plan added at least one new wrinkle, using Greenhill more as a pass receiver. He caught three for 46 yards, after making just two grabs heading into Friday night.

Those adjustments helped Crockett score on the game’s opening drive with relative ease, set up by a 39-yard return of the opening kickoff by Demo Pickens. With the ball already across midfield, the Cavs needed just eight plays to reach the end zone, which occurred when Lambert found his twin brother Preston for an 18-yard touchdown toss. Avery Hurst’s extra point made it 7-0 with less than three minutes gone, and you could see the home team’s confidence growing with each snap.

Obion responded by doing what Obion had been doing: scoring. Quarterback Hamilton May broke a 34-yard run for the touchdown with 5:59 left in the first quarter, and Jeremy Jimenez's extra tied the game.

The Rebels, anxious to get the ball back – after all, their defense DID yield 64 points to Haywood a couple of weeks ago – tried an onside kick, but Preston Lambert covered it at midfield and Crockett again just had a short way to go, with Grayson Lambert running for most of it. He completed the journey by tossing a seven-yard touchdown pass to Willie Walker, who missed last week's game with Dyer County. Hurst again booted the extra, and it looked like an offensive shootout was imminent.

But after the teams shockingly exchanged punts, the Cavs' Antuan Hobson recovered a fumble after a short pass reception by Kweli Purifoy, and the hosts were back in business at the Obion 34. A Lambert-to-Greenhill pass covered 26 yards, and the junior running back took care of the final eight on the next play. While the extra point try failed, Crockett was up 20-7 at the half, solidified when freshman Dakylan Woods intercepted an Obion pass in the end zone on the final snap.

The Rebels emerged for the third period determined to just snap it to May and let him run with it, a strategy that moved them quickly to the Cav 30. But Crockett's defense stiffened. Pickens slammed runner Tucker Moore for no gain on a third-down play, and Gabe Dupree – who was all over the field for the Cavs defensively – belted Morgan Carpenter for a five-yard loss on a quick pass to turn the ball over midway through the quarter.

Obion didn't advance the ball into Cav territory again until early in the final period, but Crockett senior Carson Pruitt stuffed May for a two-yard loss and a fourth-down pass fell incomplete to return possession to Crockett. Being the fourth quarter, Greenhill revved into his usual higher gear and led a 55-yard drive, culminating in another eight-yard touchdown scamper. Hurst's extra made it 27-7 with about five minutes left. (The second half was played without the scoreboard clock operating.)

Crockett clinched the game for good shortly thereafter. Hobson – the Cavs' usual pass reception leader, but seldom targeted in this one – decided to catch one of Obion's passes instead. Preston Lambert clobbered the intended receiver as the ball arrived and then had the presence of mind to shove him out of the way as the ball – which had ricocheted high into the air – was descending toward him. Hobson drifted in from the left side, snatched it, and proceeded to return the interception 33 yards and send the home crowd into a frenzy.

The win gives the Cavs a 1-1 regional record heading into their bye week. Crockett returns to the field for its final home game (unless playoff seeding is favorable) October 13 against Manassas in a special "Pink-Out" night to salute the fight against breast cancer and honor the memory of Cav senior Sam Kalinisan's mother Rachel.

Final Statistics

Rushes-Yards: CC – Deuce Greenhill 18-105, Grayson Lambert 15-77, Demo Pickens 2-16, **Team 35-198. OBION** – Hamilton May 13-105, Tucker Moore 13-33, Kweli Purifoy 1-(-1), **Team 27-137.**

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC – G. Lambert 6-11-74-0. **OBION** – May 14-22-95-2.

Receptions-Yards: CC – Greenhill 3-46, Preston Lambert 1-18, Willie Walker 1-7, Antuan Hobson 1-3. **OBION** – Kevyn Alfter 5-43, Bryson Underwood 2-23, Purifoy 3-12, Noah Parker 3-11, Morgan Carpenter 1-6.

Interceptions: CC – Antuan Hobson 1-33, Dakylan Woods 1-0 (in end zone). **OBION** – None.

Total Yards: CC 272, OBION 232.

First Downs: CC 15, OBION 10.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 1-0, OBION 2-1.

Penalties-Yards: CC 3-25, OBION 7-57.

Punts-Yards: CC Joseph Gould 1-40, OBION 1-16.



Above: Anatomy of a game-clinching interception: First, Preston Lambert (13) hammers Obion's Tucker Moore (33) as the pass arrives, sending the ball into the air as Amarion Hobson watches from behind...



Above: The Cavalier Crazies were definitely on their "Neon" game.

Right: Deuce Greenhill (0) quickly changes direction and gives linemen Kevin Garduno (74) and Joseph Gould (71) another chance to knock people over.

Season Statistics (7 Games; Record 5-2; Region 1-1)

Rushes-Yards: CC – Deuce Greenhill 130-950, Dakylan Woods 30-240, Gabe Dupree 28-181, Grayson Lambert 53-140, Carson Pruitt 5-31, Demo Pickens 10-24, Ben Burgess 4-(-1), **Team 260-1,565. Opponents 256-1,149.**

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC – G. Lambert 39-79-614-1, Ben Burgess 1-2-0-0, **Team 40-81-614-1. Opponents 58-107-795-8.**

Receptions-Yards: CC – Antuan Hobson 11-175, Willie Walker 9-113, Preston Lambert 4-97, Amarion Hobson 3-76, Deuce Greenhill 5-69, Demo Pickens 5-48, Carson Pruitt 3-36, **Team 40-614. Opponents 58-795.**

Interceptions: Antuan Hobson 3-64 (1 TD return), Demo Pickens 3-34, Gabe Dupree 1-13, Dakylan Woods 1-0, **Team 8-111. Opponents 1-30.**

Points (TDs-2PC-XP-FG-P): Greenhill 14-0-0-0-84, Avery Hurst 0-0-20-1-25, Woods 4-0-0-0-24, Antuan Hobson 3-1-0-0-20, Preston Lambert 2-1-0-0-14, Walker 2-0-0-0-12, Dupree 2-0-0-0-12, Grayson Lambert 1-0-0-0-6, Pruitt 1-0-0-0-6.

Total Yards: CC 2,179, Opponents 1,944.

First Downs: CC 84, Opponents 83.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 15-4, Opponents 18-8.

Penalties-Yards: CC 22-155, Opponents 36-283.

Punts-Yards-Avg: CC – Joseph Gould 17-694-40.8, **Opponents 20-557-27.9.**

Points Scored: CC 204, Opponents 121.

Below: Jacob Knox listens to Coach Kevin Ward's post-game speech...



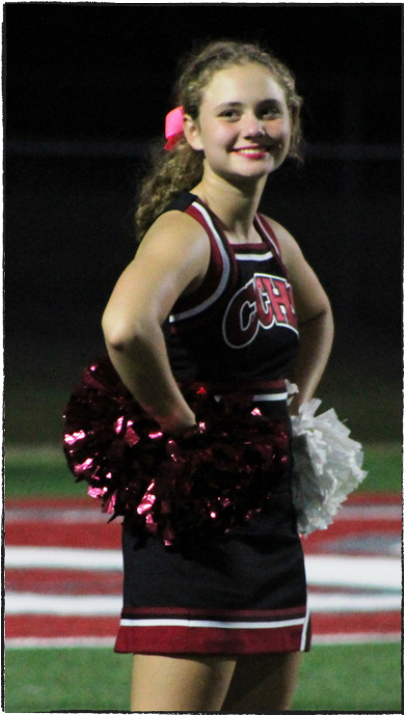
Below: When the lights finally come back on, we can see the best part of the celebration is over, but Preston Lambert (13) is being congratulated by Antuan Hobson (2), Deuce Greenhill (0), and Amarion Hobson (4) after snaring an 18-yard TD pass from twin brother Grayson.



Above: Crockett's Marching Cavaliers put on another dazzling halftime performance for Homecoming.
Below: Early on, the running of QB Grayson Lambert was key. Here he hits a hole created by blockers Willie Walker (6), Kevin Garduno (74), Jordan Rainey (70), Ethan Allen (in front of Lambert), and Preston Vernon (50).



Left: And having made the interception, Hobson (2) races to pick up blocks from Gabe Dupree (29), Jacob Knox (42), Luke Carter (19), and Dakylan Woods (32) to return it for 33 yards and put the game away.



Above: Ethan Allen pays attention during Coach Ward's post game speech.
Left: Freshman cheerleader Rachel Crossnoe will swap her uniform for golf attire on Monday and represent Crockett in the regional tournament in Clarksville.



Above: A tired but happy Carson Pruitt (34) readies for the post-game huddle as assistant coach Josh Holt (right) gets a congratulatory kiss from his daughter.

Below: With the recent annoying trend of stadiums turning the lights off on touchdowns, here's what photographers are faced with when trying to capture scoring celebrations.



Above: Crockett's defense throttled Obion's potent offense with plays like this, keeping pass receivers contained. Surrounding this catch are Austin Carroll (56), Dakylan Woods (32), Clarence Luten (39), and Gabe Dupree (29).
Below: The ball is now high in the air, and any number of people have an opportunity to settle under it...



Left: Seeing that Moore (33) might be one of them, Lambert (13) has the presence of mind to push him away from his chance as Antuan Hobson (2) arrives from the side...



Above: Clarence Luten listens to Coach Ward's post game speech.



Above: More gang-tackling defense is displayed here by Carson Pruitt (34), Jacob Knox (42), Preston Vernon (50), Zerafin Guardian (76), and Preston Lambert (13).