

CAVALIERS NOTCH MUCH-NEEDED WIN; HART DOOMS LADY CAVS



Above: Butler's reaction at the final buzzer tells it all as Crockett improved to 2-6 with the narrow win.



Above: Crockett's Amaria Walker and Gibson County's Micah Hart prepare to jockey for rebound position as the ball moves around the perimeter.

By Ron Barry

"We really needed to win one like this. Maybe it'll be the boost of confidence our guys need."

With those words, Crockett County boys coach Rick Rudesill breathed a sigh of relief after his Cavaliers survived a frantic final 10 seconds to outlast Gibson County 59-56 Tuesday night in Alamo.

In the girls game that preceded it, the Lady Pioneers' Micah Hart proved too much for Crockett defenders to handle, pouring in 24 points as unbeaten Gibson County downed the Lady Cavs 52-40.

Rudesill, in his first season as Crockett's boys coach, is guiding his troops through the meat of one of the toughest schedules in the state in Class 3-A.

"Our guys have been playing extremely hard each time out; I certainly can't fault their effort," he said, "and this schedule is one of the reasons we were 1-6. But tonight we made more buckets than we have been. A lot of these players are new, I'm new, and we're all getting used to a new system. I've been telling them all along to just keep learning and grinding; what really counts is when the District schedule begins in January. But it sure feels good to get a game like this."

To get it, the Cavs had to scratch back from a 31-24 halftime deficit created largely by early foul trouble on leading scorer Lane Simmons, who picked up two calls in the first quarter and sat out the rest of the half. Crockett was fortunate to be within seven without Simmons on the floor.

He returned in the third period and promptly netted eight of the Cavs' 17 points as the hosts surged to grab a 41-40 advantage to begin the final period. Rudesill helped engineer the charge by playing both his point guards together - starter Zay Jones and reserve Amarion Hobson - over a long stretch of the comeback.

Gibson County had ridden the blazing hot hand of Sedric Lake for the first half, with the talented sharpshooter nailing five threes and a total of 21 points before intermission. But Crockett held him to six over the final 16 minutes, one of the keys to the win.

In the fourth stanza, the game went back-and-forth for the first five minutes, but Crockett finally edged ahead 53-51 when reserve Kevin Pledge - who gave Rudesill some solid minutes filling in for Simmons - muscled in a put-back basket with only 2:53 remaining. Each team added a free throw before Simmons broke out of a pack with a rebound and raced the length of the floor for a layup to give the Cavs a 56-52 edge with 2:02 to go.

Another key moment occurred when Gibson's Kylan Finch made a basket and was fouled with 1:58 on the clock. He made the free throw which would have cut the margin to 56-55, but it was waived off by a lane violation.

The remaining time resembled a pinball machine or a foosball game, with players racing all over the place deflecting passes, diving on loose balls, glancing off each other, and driving most of the spectators beyond the edges of their seats. Nobody was scoring, however, and the next points didn't occur until 26.4 seconds were left.

Antuan Hobson had been fouled after securing one of the wayward loose balls, and he calmly stepped to the line and knocked down both free throws to put Crockett up 58-54. The Pioneers responded with another Lynch basket on a twisting circus shot from underneath the backboard to make it 56-54 with 10.9 to play and a timeout called.

The Cavs had to inbound, but the lead pass sailed near the Gibson County bench and Amarion Hobson barely saved it back onto the court while falling out of bounds. It bounced around between players for so long that Hobson had time to rush back onto the court and dive on it, and he was fouled in the melee with 5.7 seconds remaining.

Hobson hit the first free throw but missed the second. Gibson rebounded and tried a quick outlet pass, but Crockett's Rhett Butler read it perfectly, intercepted it, and dribbled toward the Cav bench before passing to a teammate in the corner as time expired.

Simmons – who didn't score at all in his limited first half – connected for 14 in the second to pace Crockett scorers. Antuan Hobson added 11, Dre Walker nine, and Butler eight. Amarion Hobson and Pledge had six each, and Jones tallied all five of his points in the final period as the Cavs improved to 2-6. Gibson County fell to 5-4 despite Leke's 27-point performance, 13 points from Isaiah DeBerry, and 12 from Lynch.

The girls game was a tale of two halves. Crockett clawed its way to a 16-14 first-period lead on the strength of 10 points by senior Hannah Johnson. Coach Kayla Irvin's squad won the second quarter as well, 14-12, and held a 30-26 advantage at the intermission over the Lady Pioneers, who came in at 11-0 for the season.

But Hart – an All-Everything selection in West Tennessee in past years – asserted herself in the third and fourth stanzas, and she and her teammates threw up a defensive pressure that rendered Crockett's offense helpless. Hart tallied 14 points over the final two quarters, while the Lady Cavs managed just one field goal in each of the last two periods, along with some harmless free throws.

It took Gibson County just 65 seconds to erase Crockett's halftime lead. The visitors outscored their hosts 16-5 in the third and 10-5 in the fourth to secure the triumph.

Johnson finished with 16 to lead Crockett, now 6-2 for the year. Sarah Cherry had nine, Amaria Walker seven, and Jordyn Maddox six for the Lady Cavs. Hart's 24-point effort for Gibson was supported by Georgia Lannom's 11 and seven points from point guard A'Kira Riding.

Both Crockett squads host Humboldt Friday night, with the girls tipping off at 6:00.

Tuesday, Dec. 12 at Alamo

CC Girls (40): Karlee Castellaw 0 0-0 0, Sarah Cherry 2 4-4 9, Gabby Bursey 0 0-0 0, Charity Greenhill 0 0-0 0, Jordyn Maddox 3 0-0 6, Hannah Johnson 6 2-5 16, Jayden Maddox 1 0-0 2, Amaria Walker 3 1-2 7, **Team 15 7-11 40. 3-Ptrs:** Johnson 2, Cherry 1. **Record: 6-2.**

Gibson County (52): A'Kira Riding 2 3-4 7, Micah Hart 11 0-0 24, Sania Reaves 1 3-4 5, Georgia Lannom 4 3-4 11, Maya Turner 0 2-2 2, Kailey Davidson 1 0-0 3, **Team 19 11-14 52. 3-Ptrs:** Hart 2, Davidson 1. **Record: 12-0.**

CC Boys (59): Grayson Lambert 0 0-4 0, Antuan Hobson 3 3-4 11, Rhett Butler 4 0-0 8, Preston Lambert 0 0-0 0, Lane Simmons 7 0-1 14, Amarion Hobson 2 1-2 6, Dre Walker 4 0-1 9, Kevin Pledge 3 0-0 6, Xavier Jones 1 3-4 5, **Team 24 7-12 59. 3-Ptrs:** An. Hobson 2, Am. Hobson 1, Walker 1. **Record: 2-6.**

Gibson County (56): Jayden Southerland 0 0-0 0, DeMarian Wright 0 0-0 0, Kylan Finch 6 0-1 12, Sedric Leke 11 0-1 27, Trajan Eddings 0 0-0 0, Dillon Reynolds 0 1-2 1, Isaiah DeBerry 3 7-9 13, Carter Crandall 1 1-2 3, Ryan Goad 0 0-0 0, **Team 21 9-15 56. 3-Ptrs:** Leke 5. **Record: 5-4.**



Above: Before the final frenzy of the last 10 seconds, these free throws by Antuan Hobson with 26.4 seconds remaining gave the Cavs a 58-54 lead



Left: Rhett Butler (3) intercepts Gibson County's outlet pass after the free throw miss and reads a pass to the corner as Coach Rick Rudesill looks on.



Left: Crockett's Amarion Hobson (12) saves the ball from going out of bounds in front of the Gibson County bench with 10 seconds left to play...

Below: ... and once the ball has been knocked around a while, Hobson has time to get back on the court and somehow grab it again, and he is fouled as teammate Lane Simmons (11) celebrates and Rhett Butler (3) helps point out the foul.



Above: Amarion Hobson prepares to deliver the free throw that puts Crockett up by three points with 5.7 second left to play.



Above: Lane Simmons made this hard-charging layup with two minutes left to push Crockett ahead 56-52; he had all 14 of his points in the second half.

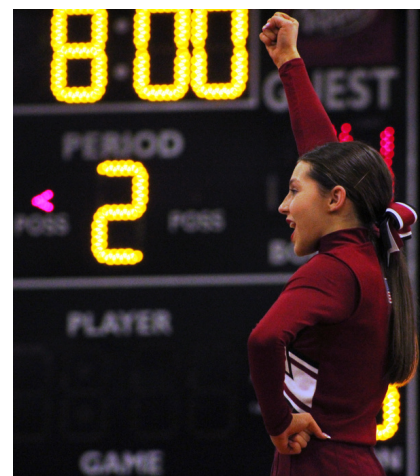
Below: Zay Jones (25) directs the offense as the Cavs begin their third-quarter comeback.



Above: Dre Walker made a big third-quarter three-pointer to help key Crockett's comeback in the period, and reacted with this confident follow-through.



Above: Lady Cav point guard Sarah Cherry hollers out directions as she tries to get something going offensively for Crockett. Cherry scored nine points in the game.



Above: Crockett cheerleader Zoey Burleson tries to whip up some excitement between the first and second quarters.

Below: Kevin Pledge gave Coach Rick Rudesill some solid minutes in relief of Simmons, who picked up two quick fouls in the first half. Pledge also netted two key baskets in the final period.



Left: Gibson County made things difficult for Crockett's Hannah Johnson (14) after her 10-point opening quarter, double-teaming her pretty much from that point on.



Above: The Maddox sisters - Jayden (left) and Jordyn - catch their breath on the bench after some quickly-paced minutes in the first half.