

# HANNAH JOHNSON CALMLY DOES IT AGAIN: LATE FREE THROWS DUMP SOUTH GIBSON



**Above:** Before Johnson sets up at the foul line, Castellaw showers her with some positive affirmation, reminding her she was made for situations like this one.

**By Ron Barry**

The biggest assist of Friday night's basketball encounter between Crockett County and South Gibson will not appear on any post-game stat sheets.

But right before Lady Cavalier senior Hannah Johnson stepped to the foul line with 0.6 seconds on the clock and her team trailing by a single point, teammate Karlee Castellaw stepped up beside her near the top of the key and did her best to plant good thoughts in her ear.

So what exactly did she say?

"She reminded me that these are the exact moments I am made for and I just need to keep the confidence I have," Johnson said. The ice-veined forward proceeded to calmly swish both free throws – earned when she was pounded on an offensive rebound put-back just before the final buzzer would have sounded – and provided the decisive points as Crockett escaped with a 41-40 district victory on the road in Medina.

Johnson – who plays with amazing energy when on the court – is amazingly matter-of-fact when off of it.

"I wasn't really worried about it," she said. "I practice this situation every day, so I figured it wasn't any big deal. I just felt like I was going to make them both because this is why we put the work in."



**Above:** Hannah Johnson (14) is surrounded by teammates Sarah Cherry, Karlee Castellaw, and Jordyn Maddox after being fouled with less than a second to play and the Lady Cavs down by one point to host South Gibson County.

For Castellaw – who'd had a frustrating night offensively, although she recorded a number of key assists that helped keep the Lady Cavs in contention – she was typically just trying to find a way to contribute.

"I always try to still encourage, even when it's not my best night," the junior guard said.

Johnson's huge offensive rebound capped off a frantic final 9.8 seconds that Crockett was even fortunate to have.

South Gibson's Natalie Lewis had slipped through Crockett's lane defense for a layup to give the hosts a 40-37 edge with 1:02 to play. Johnson promptly answered with a drive from the right baseline to make it 40-39 with 46.5 ticks to go. And at that point, the Lady Hornets' strategy was to try to play keep-away for the remaining time.

They almost pulled it off, as Crockett's defenders either wouldn't or couldn't foul anybody until there were only 9.8 seconds on the scoreboard, and SGC's Karson Dunn – the same player who had drained 10-of-10 fourth-quarter free throws to help beat the Lady Cavs 50-43 in their first meeting this season – was headed to the line.

Incredibly, she clanked them both, and Crockett hurried downcourt with the rebound off the second one and quickly got off a corner three-point try. It missed, but a Lady Cav grabbed the carom and tossed up another errant shot. Somehow, Johnson fought through the traffic for yet another offensive rebound and hurriedly got off another try before the buzzer could sound – and Lewis smacked her on the arm as the fans on both sides roared.

Johnson's teammates quickly gathered around her, and she headed toward the free throw line. But before she got set, Castellaw approached with her positive affirmation, even pointing to her own brain as she tried to project the confidence needed. Johnson's facial expression barely flinched as she listened, as if to say, "I got this."

And she did, as the net barely moved on either free throw. A long desperation pass on the ensuing inbounds play failed to reach its target, and Coach Kayla Irvin's crew had its 15th win in 21 starts.

The last-second drama possibly would not have even occurred if not for a bizarre stretch of time just prior to the end of the third period. Crockett was holding a 35-27 lead – one which it had slowly been extending during the quarter – when it gained apparent possession on a quickly-whistled held ball call with 1:05 remaining. As the official was making the call, the Lady Hornets ripped the ball loose and threw a long downcourt pass for what could have been a breakaway layup.

Meanwhile, the official who made the call looked at the scorer's table, correctly signaled that Crockett owned the next possession, and signaled toward the Lady Cav basket. The table personnel then quickly made the switch on the possession arrow to point toward South Gibson for the next occurrence.

Lady Hornet coach Catie Embrey, who was upset the held ball call had been made in the first place, grew more irate when she looked at the possession arrow at the scorers' table, which had now been switched to point toward the South Gibson basket. No explanation seemed to be sufficient to her, but the officials allowed her to argue for an interminable amount of time, which basically destroyed any momentum the Lady Cavs had been building.

When play finally resumed – after several minutes – Crockett didn't help itself by then trying to play for the last shot of the quarter, which failed when South Gibson intercepted a pass.

Lady Cav point guard Sarah Cherry made a free throw four seconds into the final period, and then Irvin's club went four minutes without scoring again. In the meantime, the Lady Hornets got a three-pointer from Dunn, two free throws and a layup from freshman Jade Reed, and a Hallie Allen bucket to regain the advantage 36-35 at the 4:10 mark.

Crockett center Amaria Walker finally stopped the bleeding when she took a Castellaw pass and wheeled inside for a basket with 3:39 to go. After a South Gibson miss, Crockett then attempted to hold the ball again rather than attack offensively, and threw the ball away in less than 40 seconds. The hosts regained the lead at the 1:22 mark when Reed slipped open inside and scored again.

But the Lady Cavs eventually prevailed as previously described, thanks to Johnson's marvelous 21-point effort – her second straight – and seven points each from Walker and Jordyn Maddox. Reed netted 17 and Dunn 11 for South Gibson, now 14-9 on the year.

In the boys' game, after a competitive opening quarter, the Cavaliers dropped their 19th game in 21 tries when the Hornets unleashed a three-point barrage that netted 14 triples on the way to a 72-50 triumph. The winners held a 42-3 edge in points scored from beyond the arc.

Noah Clouse made five of them and led South Gibson's offense with 15 points. Koen Thomas and Sam Tritt each scored 12 and Tommy Baker chipped in 10 for the winners. Dre Walker tallied 12 as Crockett's one double-figure scorer. Antuan Hobson had seven and Jayden Frye, Lane Simmons, and Kevin Pledge added six apiece.

Both Crockett teams return home Tuesday night for a 6:00 twin bill with Dyersburg. Both Dyersburg teams are undefeated thus far in district play.



**Above:** Reminding her to "keep your confidence," Castellaw points to her own brain and throws some more positive thoughts Johnson's way.

**Right:** One final "you GOT this!," and Johnson would move over to the foul line.

#### Friday, Jan. 26 at Medina

**CC Girls (41):** Karlee Castellaw 0 0-0 0, Sarah Cherry 11-2 3, Charity Greenhill 10-0 3, Jordyn Maddox 3 0-0 7, Hannah Johnson 8 3-3 21, Jayden Maddox 0 0-0 0, Amaria Walker 3 1-2 7, **Team 16 5-7 41. 3-Ptrs:** Johnson 2, Jor. Maddox 1, Greenhill 1. **Record: 15-6 (2-2 district).**

**South Gibson County (40):** Mary Teague 0 0-0 0, Natalie Lewis 2 1-2 5, Jade Reed 6 4-4 17, Hallie Allen 3 1-2 7, Karson Dunn 4 0-2 11, Brooklyn Davidson 0 0-0 0, Addy Doyle 0 0-0 0, **Team 15 6-10 40. 3-Ptrs:** Dunn 3, Reed 1. **Record: 14-9 (2-2 district).**

**CC Boys (50):** Grayson Lambert 0 0-0 0, Antuan Hobson 2 3-4 7, Jayden Frye 2 2-2 6, Rhett Butler 1 0-0 3, Lane Simmons 3 0-0 6, Amaron Hobson 12-2 4, Dre Walker 5 2-4 12, Kevin Pledge 3 0-0 6, Zay Jones 2 0-0 4, Demo Pickens 1 0-0 2, Davian Green 0 0-0 0, **Team 20 9-12 50. 3-Ptrs:** Butler 1. **Record: 2-19 (0-4 district).**

**South Gibson County (72):** Koen Thomas 3 5-6 12, Tommy Baker 3 3-4 10, Cade Beaver 1 1-2 4, Kale Marcum 1 0-0 2, Noah Clouse 5 0-0 15, Trevor Lemings 3 0-1 7, Sam Tritt 3 3-3 12, Gavin Crawford 1 0-0 2, Aiden Moore 2 0-0 5, Jackson Strickland 0 0-0 0, Collin Lockett 0 0-0 0, Richard Addo 0 0-0 0, Cooper Yarbrow 1 0-0 3, **Team 23 12-16 72. 3-Ptrs:** Clouse 5, Tritt 3, Thomas 1, Baker 1, Beaver 1, Lemings 1, Moore 1, Yarbrow 1. **Record: 11-10 (3-1 district).**



**Left:** The scoreboard sets the stage and tells the story as Hannah Johnson lets fly with the first free throw, which would tie the game at 40-all.







**Above:** The South Gibson scoreboard tried to fade out as the second shot was on its way, with Johnson ripping it through the net again and giving Crockett the 41-40 victory.



**Above:** Finally - after putting the Lady Cavs ahead - Johnson shows some emotion with her teammates as the Lady Hornets call timeout and try to figure out a plan... which didn't work.



**Above:** At the beginning of the final quarter, it was Hannah Johnson that was providing the motivation speech, as Sarah Cherry (left), Karlee Castellaw, and Jayden Maddox listen in.



**Above:** Jordyn Maddox (13) applies defensive pressure to South Gibson's Natalie Lewis as Crockett teammates Jayden Maddox (22) and Karlee Castellaw (2) keep an eye on their girls near the baseline.



**Above:** Crockett point guard Sarah Cherry tries to find some operating room away from Lady Hornet defender Mary Teague (11).





**Left:** Senior guard Charity Greenhill is telling everyone to get out of her way as she comes dashing toward the lane and past South Gibson defender Natalie Lewis.



**Above:** Crockett guard Karlee Castellaw (right) wrestles with South Gibson's Karson Dunn for possession of this ball in the second half. Castellaw had several key assists for the Lady Cavs.



**Left:** But it was Hannah Johnson's night again, scoring 21 points for the second consecutive game and pushing her career total to 1,032.

**Below:** Lane Simmons (11), Antuan Hobson (1), and Dre Walker (23) are all about to try to pounce on this fumble by South Gibson's Tommy Baker (23).





**Below:** Crockett's Amarion Hobson draws a triple-team of South Gibson defenders as he nears the lane in Friday night's game.



**Above:** Jayden Frye applies some defensive pressure to this Hornet guard in the second half of Friday night's contest at Medina.



**Left:** Crockett's Dre Walker (23) is about to go up and over this South Gibson double-team for two of his team-leading 12 points.

**Right:** Antuan Hobson (1) goes up for a shot while a Lane Simmons pick seals off two different South Gibson defenders.

