

NO LONGER UNBEATEN; LADY CAVS TAKE DOWN GIBSON COUNTY



Above: Crockett senior Charity Greenhill - guarded here by Gibson County's Micah Hart - smoked the Lady Pioneers for 10 first-half points and set the tone for the Lady Cavs' 46-40 upset win.

By Ron Barry

One of the things about sports that makes them fun is the fact that they can be so unpredictable.

Witness Thursday night's basketball game between visiting Crockett County - which looked pretty shaky in a HUB Classic loss to Chester County in its most recent contest - and homestanding Gibson County, taking its home court with a 19-0 record and visions, perhaps, of an undefeated season.

Crockett's squad is no slouch. It came in at 11-4. Sarah Cherry and Hannah Johnson have each scored 30 points in a game this season, so if either or both get hot, the Lady Cavaliers might have a chance. Maybe Karlee Castellaw or Jordyn Maddox has a good night and lights it up. Jayden Maddox could set 100 screens, grab a boatload of rebounds, toss in a couple of baskets, draw two or three charges, and Coach Kayla Irvin's club might have an outside shot at an upset.

But did any of you have Charity Greenhill's 10 first-half points and Amaria Walker's 11 second-half tallies on your "Crockett Wins" Bingo card?

Well, that's exactly what happened. Greenhill, who hadn't scored in the previous five games, came out of the gate looking like Steph Curry. Walker, who's reliable for a few buckets a game, became the go-to closer when Johnson - who often fills that role - was battling severe leg cramps down the stretch and was coming in and out of the game every few dead balls.

The result? Crockett pulled the stunner, 46-40, weathering every furious storm that Micah Hart and the rest of the Lady Pioneers could throw at them, and showed Irvin a grit and perseverance that put a smile on her face as early as the second quarter, when Greenhill drilled her second three-pointer in a row to give the Lady Cavs a 24-12 lead.

"I haven't had a lot of confidence lately, honestly," Greenhill said after the matchup. "But my teammates kept encouraging me. We had some good practices coming into this one, so I was feeling a little better about making a good contribution."

And things can get rolling when that first shot goes in, right?

"Yeah," she smiled. "After that, I think our whole team got a little fired up."

Johnson and Jayden Maddox each had four points as Crockett took a slim 12-9 lead after one quarter. But Greenhill kicked off the second period with a three, then snaked down the middle of the lane shortly thereafter and nailed a nice little floater over the Lady Pioneer defense. A minute later, Greenhill - now actively seeking an open shot - nailed another trey from the left corner and suddenly Crockett was up by 12 and Gibson County was heading for the bench with a timeout.

"We kind of hit them early like Chester County did to us in our last game," Irvin said. "We got up 13 at the half (27-14) and it gave our team a lift heading into the third quarter. We knew they'd make a run like they always do, but each time they'd get close we'd push it back to eight or 10, and you could see our confidence growing."

Greenhill and Jordyn Maddox - just a freshman - combined for all 15 of Crockett's second-period points, something the Lady Pioneers could not have imagined in their pre-game planning.

Even so, in the third stanza, the hosts cut it to six 31-25 on two free throws by the immensely talented Hart with 1:32 to play, but Castellaw responded with a tough drive to the basket from the left side and slipped in a layup to make it 33-25 with 45 second remaining. Following a Gibson miss, Walker converted a Castellaw pass for another layup with just two ticks on the clock to boost the Lady Cav edge to 35-25 heading into the final quarter.

Gibson scored first, but Castellaw again answered with a driving layup through traffic to get the score to 38-27 with 6:51 to go. But then Johnson started pulling up lame - taking one of Crockett's best ballhandlers out for a while - and the margin began to slip away.

With Crockett trainer Carah-Beth Beck feverishly working on Johnson's legs on the sidelines, Gibson County racked up the game's next nine points, the last coming on a three by Hart from the top of the key with 3:33 to play and the score now at 38-36.

Johnson re-entered and helped Cherry and Castellaw kill a little time off the clock before Walker slipped behind her defender and nailed another layup. Just 26 seconds later, she did it again, and the margin was 42-36 at the 2:44 mark.

The hosts cut it back to four shortly thereafter, but Crockett worked it down to 47.8 seconds before Walker was fouled on a drive. She calmly drilled both free throws for a 44-38 edge. Sania Reaves countered with a pair for Gibson 20 seconds later, and the Lady Pioneers got the ball back after another foul, but Hart missed a three-pointer.

The Lady Cavs rebounded, and eventually Cherry was fouled with 4.8 seconds remaining. Two successful free throws later, Crockett had its upset win.

"I am so proud of these kids for the fight they showed tonight," Irwin said. "We got so many contributions from each kid defensively, on loose balls, and on the boards. It all started with the good practices we've had this week. And when Charity came out in that first half and hit those shots, it just set the tone for the whole team."

Irwin was quick to remind her girls in the locker room that, while this was a great win, they didn't need to be satisfied with it and let up against McNairy Central, which visits Alamo tonight. "And they have a very good team too," Irwin said.

Greenhill thought the win would help in the long run.

"When we started this season, we didn't really know if we were going to be any good or not," she said. "And then when we got off to a really good start, I think sometimes then we got carried away with it a little bit and lost some concentration. But this game should show us what we're capable of if we just play hard."

The boys game that followed Thursday night was somewhat anti-climactic, even though the Cavaliers were within three points as the fourth period began. But the hosts stretched the advantage on several Crockett turnovers and won the contest 58-49 behind a 20-point performance by Sedric Leke and 15 points from Kylan Finch.

Antuan Hobson and Lane Simmons netted 10 apiece and Dre Walker had eight for the Cavaliers, who dropped to 2-14 on the season. Gibson County is now 8-8.

Tonight's doubleheader with McNairy is set for a 6:00 tipoff.

Thursday, Jan. 4 at Dyer

CC Girls (46): Karlee Castellaw 2 0-2 4, Sarah Cherry 2 2-2 6, Charity Greenhill 4 0-0 10, Jordyn Maddox 2 0-2 5, Hannah Johnson 3 0-0 6, Halle Holyfield 0 0-0 0, Jayden Maddox 2 0-0 4, Amaria Walker 4 3-4 11, **Team 19 5-10 46. 3-Ptrs:** Greenhill 2, Jor. Maddox 1. **Record: 12-4.**

Gibson County (40): A'Kira Riding 0 0-0 0, Micah Hart 8 2-2 20, Sania Reaves 3 2-2 9, Georgia Lannom 2 3-8 7, Emily Skinner 0 0-0 0, Maya Turner 2 0-0 4, Kailey Davidson 0 0-0 0, **Team 15 7-12 40. 3-Ptrs:** Hart 2, Reaves 1. **Record: 19-1.**

CC Boys (49): Grayson Lambert 1 0-0 2, Antuan Hobson 5 0-0 10, Jayden Frye 1 0-0 3, Preston Lambert 0 0-0 0, Lane Simmons 5 0-0 10, Amarion Hobson 1 0-0 2, Dre Walker 3 1-2 8, Kevin Pledge 2 0-0 4, Zay Jones 2 1-2 7, Demo Pickens 1 0-0 3, **Team 21 2-4 49. 3-Ptrs:** Jones 2, Pickens 1, Walker 1, Frye 1. **Record: 2-14.**

Gibson County (58): Jayden Southerland 0 0-0 0, DeMarian Wright 0 0-0 0, Kylan Finch 6 3-5 15, Avante Garrett 0 0-0 0, Sedric Leke 9 1-4 20, Trajan Eddings 0 0-0 0, Jeremiah Barnes 0 0-0 0, Dillon Reynolds 1 1-2 3, Isaiah DeBerry 3 4-5 10, Carter Crandall 4 0-2 8, Ryan Goad 1 0-0 2, **Team 24 9-18 58. 3-Ptrs:** Leke 1. **Record: 8-8.**



Above: Lady Cav center Amaria Walker (25) drew this foul with 47 second remaining and hit both free throws to give Crockett a six-point lead. She scored all 11 of her points in the final half.

Below: Karlee Castellaw (2) made two huge second-half driving layups, each one thwarting a Gibson County run, to set the stage for her teammates' free throws that clinched the victory.



Above: Lady Cav seniors Jayden Maddox (22) and Sarah Cherry (3) battle Gibson County's A'Kira Riding for possession of a loose ball, showing the fire the team played with all night.



Above: Crockett freshman Jordyn Maddox scored five points in the second quarter to help the Lady Cavs gain a 27-14 halftime edge.



Right: Keeping an eye on the clock as she helped Crockett kill some time, Hannah Johnson (14) battled severe leg cramps throughout the final quarter but did the job.



Above: Lady Cav coach Kayla Irwin implores her team to keep up the defensive pressure in the third quarter of the 46-40 win over previously undefeated Gibson County.



Above: Amarion Hobson (12) fakes out a Pioneer defender and then drives under him to go to the basket.

Below: Crockett senior Lane Simmons (11) scores from close range on his way to 10 points, matching Antuan Hobson's total for the team high against Gibson County.



Above: Crockett cheerleader Kaylei Porter tries to whip up some encouragement during the fourth quarter of Thursday night's Cavs' game with Gibson County.

Above: Demo Pickens (34) steers Gibson County's DeMarian Wright (1) toward help he'll receive from Dre Walker (23) in Thursday night's 58-49 loss to the Pioneers.

