

DISTRICT TOURNAMENT OPTIMISM GROWS AS CROCKETT TEAMS SET TO HOST EVENT



Above: Antuan Hobson goes up to score two of his game-high 24 points as Crockett battled highly-ranked Dyer County to a virtual standstill Friday night before falling 67-60. (Photo by Ashley Owens)

By Ron Barry

It is a basketball coach's dream when his or her team is playing its best basketball when tournament season begins. It is a potential nightmare when it isn't.

Based on Friday night's performances in Alamo, Crockett County coaches Kayla Irvin and Rick Rudesill have at least some reason for optimism when the District 13-AAA Tournament tips off Tuesday night in Bill Emerson Memorial Gymnasium at CCHS.

Irvin's Lady Cavaliers crushed Dyer County 66-29 as four different players netted multiple three-point shots and Hannah Johnson scored 13 of her team-high 15 points in the first half. Rudesill's boys served notice that – despite a 3-23 overall record and a winless district slate – they could be dangerous plan-spoilers for the rest of the teams after scaring the 24-2 Choctaws to death before being edged 67-60.

The entire tournament will be played at Crockett County, and both brackets should be interesting.

On the girls side, top-seeded Dyersburg had been cruising to an unbeaten district record until star junior guard Joya Crawford went down with a leg injury that now throws the tournament title up in the air, as illustrated by Saturday night's 46-33 win by South Gibson over the now Crawford-less Lady Trojans.

That victory gives SGC the official second seed in the tournament, although Crockett has an identical district mark and the teams split head-to-head during the regular season. Both teams were already locked into the #2-vs.-#3 game anyway, so the seeding drop to third is basically irrelevant for the Lady Cavs, especially since they'll be playing in their own building anyway.

On the boys side, Dyer County is the highest-ranked squad in the event, but Dyersburg is the actual #1 seed because it split with the Choctaws, matched their district record, and then won a coin flip at the tournament organizational meeting. But Crockett's Friday night showing against Dyer shows that nobody can be taken for granted in this district.

The Cavaliers will face Obion County Tuesday night at 7:30 in the opening boys game. The Rebels live and die by the three-point shot – which they'll take from virtually any area code – so if they're not falling, Crockett's chances improve. The loser of the game, however, ends its season; four teams in the district advance to Region 7-AAA play the following week, an assignment already guaranteed to the Lady Cavaliers.

In their game Friday night, Johnson got them jumpstarted early in a 16-10 first quarter, and then Jordyn Maddox canned a pair of treys to help establish a 32-18 advantage by halftime.

The Lady Cavs really cranked it up in the third period as Karlee Castellaw nailed two of the team's four triples in the stanza as Crockett blasted the Lady Choctaws 23-7, putting the game out of reach.

Johnson's 15 points paced the offense, followed by Maddox and Charity Greenhill with 10 apiece, Sarah Cherry with nine, Castellaw with six, and Keeton Holyfield with four. Maddox, Greenhill, Castellaw, and Cherry all connected for two three-pointers in the contest, and Johnson and each Halle Holyfield added one as well.

Dyer County was a heavy favorite in the boys game, but found itself trailing 34-31 at the halftime break after Cavalier senior guard Antuan Hobson blitzed the visitors for 16 points in the first two quarters. And except for a 20-9 third-period run which eventually decided the duel in Dyer's favor, the Cavaliers battled the Choctaws to a virtual standstill, with Hobson getting considerable help from point guard Zay Jones.

Jones, not known for his outside shooting, knocked down four triples in this one as Rudesill had to shift some strategy due to the absence of Lane Simmons, who was ill. He finished with 15 points, including six in the final quarter as Crockett kept it close, forcing Dyer's Marcus Martin to hit all five of his free throws in the last stanza to clinch the decision.

Jayden Frye added six points and Rhett Butler and Dre Walker five apiece for the Cavs in support of the big nights from Hobson and Jones. Jamin Gauldin led the Choctaws with 19, receiving help from Martin with 15. Pierre Isom with 14, and Justice Mosley with 10.

The district regular season came to a close Saturday night for all the schools besides Crockett, as snow makeups forced rescheduling. Obion's girls beat Dyer County 58-31, and those squads will meet again in the Tuesday "play-in" game that opens the tournament bracket. South Gibson's girls downed Dyersburg Saturday night, giving them extra momentum for their coming battle with the Lady Cavaliers.

On the guys side, Dyer outlasted Obion 77-70 and Dyersburg topped SGC 73-54. So all the seedings are now set, with action to begin Tuesday night.

The complete District 13-AAA tournament schedule:

Tuesday, Feb. 13

6:00 – (Girls) Obion County (16-12) vs. Dyer County (12-14) [loser does not advance to region play]

7:30 – (Boys) Obion County (17-10) vs. Crockett County (3-23) [loser does not advance to region play]

Friday, Feb. 16 (Girls)

6:00 – Dyersburg (21-4) vs. Winner Obion Co/Dyer Co

7:30 – South Gibson (17-12) vs. Crockett County (19-7)

Saturday, Feb. 17 (Boys)

6:00 – Dyersburg (18-7) vs. Winner Obion Co/Crockett Co

7:30 – Dyer County (24-2) vs. South Gibson (12-15)

Monday, Feb. 19 (Girls)

6:00 – 3rd Place Game – Losers of Friday night games

7:30 – Championship Game – Winners of Friday night games

Tuesday, Feb. 20 (Boys)

6:00 – 3rd Place Game – Losers of Saturday night games

7:30 – Championship Game – Winners of Saturday night games



Above: Zay Jones, putting up a shot between two Chocotaw defenders, surprised Dyer by netting four triples and scoring 15 points overall. (Photo by Ashley Owens)

Right: Freshman Jordyn Maddox (13) finds an opening in the Dyer County defense and charges ahead, on her way to a 10-point evening. (Photo by Ashley Owens)

Friday, Feb. 9 at Alamo

CC Girls (66): Chloe Adkisson 0 0-0 0, Karlee Castellaw 2 0-0 6, Sarah Cherry 3 1-1 9, Gabby Bursey 0 0-0 0, Lanyah Cathey 1 0-1 2, Audrey Whitby 0 0-0 0, Charity Greenhill 3 2-2 10, Jordyn Maddox 4 0-0 10, Hannah Johnson 7 0-1 15, Keeton Holyfield 2 0-0 4, Halle Holyfield 1 0-0 3, Deonna Cole 0 0-0 0, Jayden Maddox 0 2-2 2, Alice Luten 0 0-0 0, Torey Savage 1 0-0 2, Amaria Walker 1 1-2 3, Ellie Henderson 0 0-0 0, **Team 25 6-9 66. 3-Ptrs:** Castellaw 2, Jo. Maddox 2, Cherry 2, Greenhill 2, Johnson 1, H. Holyfield 1. **Record: 19-7 (5-3 district).**

Dyer County (29): Emma Ables 0 0-2 0, Adelyn Talbot 0 0-0 0, Molly Roberts 0 0-0 0, Sanayah Starks 6 1-2 13, Carly Belonio 0 0-0 0, Alexis Parkin 0 0-0 0, Zya Currie 2 0-0 6, Alijah Robinson 1 0-0 2, Marley Morgan 1 0-2 2, Selena Gourley 0 0-0 0, Roniya Jones 0 0-0 0, Jamesha Watson 0 0-0 0, Zayle Hobson 3 0-2 6, Anitra Honove 0 0-0 0, **Team 13 1-8 29. 3-Ptrs:** Currie 2. **Record: 12-14 (0-8 district).**

CC Boys (60): Antuan Hobson 10 4-5 24, Jayden Frye 3 0-0 6, Rhett Butler 2 1-2 5, Amaron Hobson 1 0-0 3, Dre Walker 1 3-4 5, Kevin Pledge 0 0-0 0, Zay Jones 5 1-2 15, Demo Pickens 1 0-0 2, **Team 23 9-13 60. 3-Ptrs:** Jones 4, Am. Hobson 1. **Record: 3-23 (0-8 district).**

Dyer County (67): Jayden Tyler 1 0-0 3, Devin Hayward 0 2-2 2, Pierre Isom 7 0-7 14, Marcus Martin 4 6-7 15, Jamin Gauldin 6 4-10 19, Justice Mosley 3 3-3 10, Talon Messer 2 0-0 4, Clay Dodds 0 0-0 0, Ryker Hayes 0 0-0 0, **Team 23 15-29 67. 3-Ptrs:** Gauldin 3, Tyler 1, Martin 1, Mosley 1. **Record: 24-2 (7-1 district).**



Above: Dre Walker, who also scored five points versus the Chocotaws, goes up for a shot as the video board reminds the crowd where they are. (Photo by Ashley Owens)

Below: Sarah Cherry soars in for a fast-break layup to score two of her nine points in Crockett's rout of Dyer County Friday night. (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Above: These two have been side-by-side in Crockett basketball since the third grade. Now seniors Hannah Johnson (14) and Sarah Cherry (3) are ready for the stretch run of their careers as Crockett hosts the District 13-AAA Tournament this coming week. (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Above: Karlee Castellaw drilled a couple of three-pointers to help spark the 23-7 third-quarter run that put Friday night's game with the Lady Choctaws out of reach. (Photo by Ashley Owens)

Below: Jayden Frye looks for a cutter to hit with a pass as he brings the ball up against Dyer County Friday night. (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Below: Rhett Butler, who scored five points against Dyer County Friday night, prepares to step back for a potential three-pointer off the dribble. (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Above: Hannah Johnson (14) joins the SWAT team for this play Friday night, getting a hand on this shot from Dyer County's Alijah Robinson (13)... (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Above: ... and casually swatting it away from its intended target as Crockett teammates Amaria Walker (25) and Sarah Cherry (3) work for positioning. (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Above: Photographer Ashley Owens labeled this shot of Crockett's Jayden Maddox (22) and Dyer's Marley Morgan (14) "The Battle of the Braids." (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Right: Charity Greenhill, framed by a pair of Lady Choctaw defenders, prepares to nail one of her two three-pointers Friday night, one of four Lady Cavs to do so. (Photo by Ashley Owens)

Left: Crockett's Gabby Bursey inserted a Rockettes audition into this battle for a rebound with a couple of Dyer County opponents. (Photo by Ashley Owens)

