

SOUTH GIBSON DENIES SECTIONAL BERTH FOR CROCKETT COUNTY



Above: In the final minute, Sarah Cherry tries to find room to drive or hit a cutting teammate, but South Gibson cranked up its defensive effort and kept Crockett from finding a good shot. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

On a night when neither team came close to playing its best basketball, South Gibson's Lady Hornets made their last meaningful possession pay off better than Crockett County did.

With the score tied 29-29 with 2:13 to play in Monday night's Region 7-AAA Tournament semifinal, SGC's Karson Dunn curled around a solid screen set by Hallie Allen on defender Charity Greenhill, freeing her up at the left wing of the three-point arc. Sarah Cherry, who was guarding Allen, couldn't afford to leave her, because Allen is the usual go-to Lady Hornet when they need to make a play.

Dunn, finding herself open, let fly a three that hit nothing but the bottom of the net. It was the only field goal South Gibson made in the entire fourth quarter, but somehow it held up over the final two minutes as the Lady Hornets escaped with a 33-31 triumph, denying Crockett a Sectional berth and ending the Lady Cavaliers' season with a 21-9 record.

Crockett's final chance came when senior Hannah Johnson – the team's leading scorer and a valiant warrior over the course of many close Lady Cav games – couldn't connect on a pair of free throws with 5.3 seconds remaining on the clock.

"My heart just hurts to see my girls hurt," said Crockett Coach Kayla Irvin afterward. "I am truly so proud of these kids. I hate that it ended in such a heartbreaking way, but they are excellent young women, and I feel so privileged to know and love them. They are never defined by a single game, and I know our county and school are so proud of how they have represented us this year."

Prior to the drama of the final minutes, neither team would have pointed to this performance as one of their finest moments. Both squads came out of the gate tighter than a velcroed knot, throwing the ball away numerous times and leaving short almost every shot taken. Midway through the opening period, the score was 4-3.

By the end of the quarter it was 10-10, but after a Johnson bucket tied it again at 16-all with 1:42 left before the half, Crockett didn't score again until 4:41 remained in the third stanza and South Gibson had opened up a nine-point advantage.

A quarter-ending basket by Cherry sent Crockett into the final period trailing 29-24, but neither team scored in the next three minutes. Then Lady Cav freshman Jordyn Maddox drilled a three, and Johnson followed with a steal and breakaway layup to tie things up at 29-all with 4:40 showing on the clock.

The teams went another two minutes without scoring until Allen set the screen that freed Dunn for her decisive shot. The triple sent South Gibson (now 19-14) into the championship game against top-seeded Dyersburg (25-4), which walloped Obion County 63-41.

Crockett's major problem after Dunn's shot was that it had only been called for one fourth-quarter foulup to that point, so after Johnson scored to cut it to 32-31, the Lady Cavs had to foul four times before South Gibson would go to the line. Accomplishing that feat took almost an additional minute off the clock.

Crockett, which had 12 players score points in its opening round win over Haywood, saw only four players make it into the scoring column in this one. Johnson led the way with 10, followed by Cherry with nine and Maddox and Charity Greenhill with six apiece. Allen and Dunn each netted 11 for South Gibson.

The championship final will be held Wednesday night at 7:00 in Alamo.

REGION 7-AAA TOURNAMENT

Wednesday, February 28 (7 p.m. at Alamo)

Gm 7: Championship – Dyersburg (25-4) vs. South Gibson (19-14)

Monday, Feb. 26 at Alamo

CC Girls (31): Karlee Castellaw 0 0-0 0, Sarah Cherry 3 1-2 9, Charity Greenhill 2 0-0 6, Jordyn Maddox 2 0-0 6, Hannah Johnson 4 2-6 10, Jayden Maddox 0 0-0 0, Amaria Walker 0 0-0 0, **Team 11 3-8 31. 3-Ptrs:** Cherry 2, Jo. Maddox 2, Greenhill 2. **Record: 21-9.**

South Gibson (33): Mary Teague 1 0-0 3, Natalie Lewis 2 0-0 5, Jade Reed 0 1-4 1, Hallie Allen 5 0-0 11, Karson Dunn 3 4-5 11, Brooklyn Davidson 1 0-0 2, **Team 12 5-9 33. 3-Ptrs:** Teague 1, Lewis 1, Allen 1, Dunn 1. **Record: 19-14.**



Above: With just 4:40 to play, Hannah Johnson swooped in for this steal from Mary Teague and hit a breakaway layup to tie the game at 29-all. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett senior Sarah Cherry takes a swipe at the ball controlled by South Gibson's Hallie Allen during the Region 7-AAA Tournament semifinal Monday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Amaria Walker (25) blocks this shot attempt by South Gibson's Karson Dunn as Crockett teammates (from left) Charity Greenhill, Sarah Cherry, and Hannah Johnson look on. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett senior Sarah Cherry takes a swipe at the ball controlled by South Gibson's Hallie Allen during the Region 7-AAA Tournament semifinal Monday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Lady Cav junior Karlee Castellaw prepares to fire a crosscourt pass to a teammate as South Gibson's Jade Reed (23) looms in the foreground. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Crockett senior Jayden Maddox (22) tries to cut off a driving Hallie Allen of South Gibson in the first half of Monday night's game. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Freshman Jordyn Maddox launches a three-pointer that pulls Crockett with two points in the fourth quarter of the Region 7-AAA semifinal. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Hannah Johnson goes sprawling after colliding with South Gibson's Mary Teague in a battle for a loose ball... (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: ... that continued as Johnson rolled back over and still contested for possession as Teague tries to feed it off to a teammate. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Crockett coach Kayla Irvin, framed by assistants Brent Fronabarger (left) and Rick Rudesill, ponders her next move as the tournament semifinal rolls on. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Sarah Cherry tries to bounce a pass to Jordyn Maddox as the South Gibson assistants scream that her foot is on or across the sideline in Monday night's regional. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Crockett's Charity Greenhill (right) and South Gibson's Karson Dunn both dive for a loose ball in Monday night's action. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The game's decisive play: South Gibson's Karson Dunn peels around a solid screen set by Hallie Allen (24) on Crockett's Charity Greenhill (behind Dunn). Sarah Cherry, guarding Allen, has to stick with her because she is usually the Lady Hornets' go-to player when points are needed. As Dunn turned the corner and found herself open, she buried a three-pointer with 2:13 to go to put SGC up 32-29... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: ... and producing a round of congratulations from her teammates as Crockett players head for the bench for a timeout. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Indicative of the physicality of the often-ragged play in the low-scoring game, Charity Greenhill (12) and South Gibson's Mary Teague (11) are again on the floor after a collision as the Lady Hornets' Karson Dunn (33) streaks down the sideline with the recovered ball. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: A dejected Hannah Johnson leaves the high school court for the final time, having shown Crockett fans nothing but strength - as tattooed on her left arm - for the past four seasons, scoring over 1,000 points and performing like a warrior. (Photo by Ron Barry)