

# JOSEPH GOULD WALK-OFF LIFTS CAV BASEBALL IN CRAZY 13-12 HOME OPENER



**Above:** Joseph Gould was the hero in Crockett's home opener, driving in four runs with three hits and claiming the pitching victory in relief.

## By Ron Barry

It was 1-1. Then 2-2. Then 3-3. Then 6-3, visitors. Then 9-6, home team. Then 9-9. Then 10-9. All that in six innings – but that still doesn't tell the whole story.

Crockett County's baseball Cavaliers opened their home season Tuesday evening with one of the most topsy-turvy, frustrating, exhilarating, error-filled, but – fortunately – RESILIENT performances in their history against the visiting Halls Tigers. And by the end of the sixth, they'd come off the deck numerous times to take a 10-9 advantage into the final frame, needing just three outs to record a win.

But Crockett began the top of the seventh by committing its sixth – yes, sixth – error of the game, allowing the Halls leadoff hitter Tanner Belton to reach base. After a successful sacrifice bunt, Gavin Brewster delivered a game-tying single and took second on the throw home.

After a walk, relief pitcher Joseph Gould induced a pop fly for the second out. One more to go, and the Cavs could come to bat with the chance to win it with a run.

But Lukas Crook drilled a single to center, and Halls was back on top 11-10. Samuel Wilson followed with a double to left, and suddenly the Tigers were up 12-10 before Gould got the next man to strike out. Now the Cavs would need two to tie and three to win.

Following a leadoff strikeout, Blaine Nichols drew a walk and Reed Ingram was hit by a full-count pitch. Brady Fronabarger worked a base on balls to load the sacks. Then Carter Winders walked – for the fourth time in the game – and forced in a run, drawing the Cavs to 12-11.

Halls changed pitchers, bringing in Brewster to face Gould. And with a one-strike count, the senior lined a single to right that plated Ingram and Fronabarger as Crockett took the walk-off victory 13-12. The insanity had finally ended. And the Cavs had “reversed the curse” in which they'd lost their last three games in the last inning.

Before that highly-charged final frame, the game was a tug-of-war. Fronabarger's groundout after singles by Nichols and Ingram tied the contest at 1-1 in the first. Winders singled in Ingram in the third to make it 2-2. Callan Willis and John Vasquez combined hits to tie it again at 3-3 in the fourth.

Three Crockett errors contributed to Halls jumping ahead 6-3 in the fifth, but Coach Brent Fronabarger's crew came storming back with six runs in the bottom of the stanza, highlighted by a two-run double by Gould, an RBI single by Grayson Lambert, a bases-loaded walk to Landon Wicker, and a two-run single by Ingram.

Halls bounced right back to make it 9-9 in the top of the sixth, but Gould came on in relief to momentarily put out the fire. Crockett moved back out front 10-9 after Winders walked again, Lambert singled to right, and pinch-hitter Tyler Rathbun lined an RBI single to right, all leading up to the seventh-inning craziness in which the Cavs finally prevailed.

Gould had three hits and four RBIs and Ingram notched three hits, scored twice, and drove in two more. Winders was on base all five times he batted, and Lambert contributed two safeties to pace the offense.

Gould – the third Cav pitcher – claimed the victory. Only four of the Tigers' 12 runs were earned, thanks to the plethora of errors Crockett committed. Seven walks and a hit batsman didn't help either.

But the Cavs are now 2-3 headed into a Wednesday encounter at Union City at 4:30. The 2024 home opener is history, and it probably won't soon be forgotten.