

LADY CAVS DEMONSTRATE RESILIENCE AGAIN AS COMEBACK EDGES MUNFORD 7-6



Above: Lynden Cole hammered her second home run of the week and is currently on a four-game tear at the plate for Crockett. (Photo courtesy of Alan Cole)

By Ron Barry

They used the power ball to catch up and the small ball to break the tie.

In a nutshell, that's the description of how Crockett County's softballers roared back from a 6-2 deficit to defeat Munford 7-6 Friday night in Alamo.

Coach David Barker's Lady Cavaliers were holding on to a 2-1 lead through four innings even though pitcher Anna Stallings admitted, "Tonight wasn't my best night on the mound." But she'd worked her way out of a bases-loaded situation in the second and used an unassisted double play by first baseman Jayden Maddox to keep the contest close.

In the top of the fifth, however, Stallings issued a rare walk to Gabby Asbill and then yielded a one-out single to Vivian Millican. A fielder's choice on a bunt play failed to record an out, loading the bases. Asbill raced home to tie the game at 2-2 when Sadie Billings singled to center, but then Gracie Williams blasted a grand slam over the left-field fence, and suddenly Crockett trailed 6-2.

"(After that) I was just trying to hit my spots and keep them low," said Stallings, who struck out the next two hitters to close out the inning.

"Anna is the type of players that doesn't need much advice, just a reminder here and there," said senior catcher Lynden Cole. "All I told her was to keep it low and let her defense work behind her. Our defense was super solid tonight, just great plays all around."

For her part, Stallings retired the side in order in both the sixth and seventh frames. "Luckily our defense was behind me and made plays," she said, "and we were able to string together some hits and get the win."

Crockett had scored twice in the third when Cole slammed a two-out home run over the left-field fence - her second bomb in her last three games - which was followed by a line-drive single to right by Kinleigh Lamb and a run-producing double to left by Maddox.

In the bottom of the fifth, now trailing 6-2, Cole led off with a line-drive double to center. Lamb followed with an infield hit to the shortstop, with courtesy runner Gabby Bursey moving over to third. One out later, Brooklyn Haynes drove Bursey in with a sacrifice fly to left, cutting the margin to 6-3.

Crockett rallied again in the sixth, and Stallings got it started herself with a sharp single to left. Piper Smith entered as a courtesy runner and moved to second when Destiny Foster reached on an infield error. Smith advanced to third on a flyout by Piper White and scored when pinch-hitter Bursey bounced an infield hit to short. Munford's Millican muffed the throw to first, which allowed Foster to go to third and Bursey to second, with the score now 6-4.

With first base open, Munford intentionally walked the red-hot Cole - she's 11-for-15 with 11 RBIs in her last four games - but Lamb foiled the strategy when she popped a two-run single over the shortstop's head to deadlock the contest at 6-all.

When Stallings retired Munford in order in the top of the seventh, the opportunity was created for a walk-off win. But it's likely no one foresaw exactly how it would unfold.

Billings helped Crockett out by walking leadoff hitter Madison Solis on four straight pitches. Barker inserted freshman Tink Willis as a pinch-runner, and sent another freshman - Smith - to hit for Stallings, now that some "small ball" was in order. Smith successfully sacrificed Willis to second, but reached base herself when third sacker Mia Kate Griffin misplayed the bunt.

With another one of his best bunters due up next, Barker continued the strategy, and Foster successfully moved both runners over with another sacrifice.

With first base open and White - one of the fastest players in West Tennessee - coming up, Munford declined to intentionally walk her. Consequently, the junior leadoff hitter pushed a bunt in the shaken Griffin's direction again, and she booted it as Willis raced home with the game-winning run.

Cole said she wasn't surprised at the way the decisive run was created.

"This team as a whole is great at execution when it comes to tight situations," she said, "so when bunts were being called I was not worried about the job not being done. It's comforting when we have our speedy hitters up in tight situations because it's almost guaranteed baserunners."

Cole and Lamb - who's almost matched Cole's numbers this week - each had three hits to pace the Lady Cavs' 12-hit attack. Lamb is 10-for-17 with eight RBIs in Crockett's last five games. Stallings collected two hits for the winners.

The Lady Cavs are now 9-3 and carry their 2-0 district record into two big league contests next week - both on the road - facing Dyer County Tuesday night at 6:15 and Dyersburg Thursday night at 6:30.

Below: Freshman Piper Smith - usually used as a courtesy runner this season - laid down a key bunt in the decisive seventh-inning rally that won the game for Crockett.



Left: Senior Destiny Foster followed Smith's bunt with another successful sacrifice, setting up the game-winner for the Lady Cavs.



Below: Lady Cav pitcher Anna Stallings, while not having her best game, clamped down after Munford's grand slam and didn't let the visitors score again, allowing Crockett to make its comeback.



Above: Senior first baseman Jayden Maddox contributed a huge run-scoring double for Crockett, and also turned in an unassisted double play defensively.

Above: When an opponent gets in a situation in which Piper White can beat you with her legs - and then pitches to her anyway - well, Crockett will take that scenario every time.