

CROCKETT SOCCER TOPPLES SOUTH GIBSON, CLAIMS #1 SEED FOR DISTRICT TOURNAMENT



Above: Coach Stan Jamscek's halftime message was upbeat and positive: keep pushing and playing your game -- the scoring will come. And it did. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Crockett County soccer captain Edgar Juarez remembers playing South Gibson for the district championship in his sophomore year and coming up short.

"It wasn't a good feeling," the now-senior leader of the Cavalier kickers said. "I didn't want to walk off this field that way again."

Down 1-0 in the hotly-contested – and hot – encounter in Medina, and a little more than 55 minutes into the game, Juarez took matters into his own hands (or feet, since this is soccer).

"I wasn't really worried about not scoring yet," he said. "As the captain, I was just trying to keep everybody calm. I knew it was just a matter of time, because we were on them pretty good."

With 24:53 remaining in the match, Juarez found an opening in the Hornet defense and let fly a long boot from outside the box, somehow steering it past the SGC goalkeeper for Crockett's first score and lifting the spirits of his teammates as he tied it 1-1.

With newfound life – and knowing that if they could win the contest, they would host the upcoming district tournament as the number one seed for the first time in 10 seasons – the Cavaliers went to work, eventually finding Chris Cerda in the middle of the pitch for a shot that went through the lunging goalie's hands and then trickled agonizingly slowly toward the net like a long golf putt. The ball finally rolled just past the goal line and inches inside the post to make it 2-1 at the 10:03 mark.

Less than three minutes later, Eddy De La Rosa – who earlier in the half was bent over the sideline near the Crockett bench throwing up for such a lengthy time he was finally removed for a substitute – came flying toward the goal to intercept a crossing pass just before the Hornet keeper could grab it, smashing it into the net as he tumbled end over end in front of the post with 7:07 showing on the clock.

"I just drank too much water before we started playing," De La Rosa explained, regarding his ralphing episode earlier in the half. "I wasn't going to stay out of such an important game though. We had a chance at making some history for this team, and I wanted to be on the field for it."

De La Rosa's goal made it 3-1 Cavs, a score that held up for the victory that sends Crockett into the host role for the district tournament. Coach Stan Jamscek's club will play as the #1 seed in the semifinals on Tuesday, May 7 against the winner of this Thursday's Obion County vs. Dyer County matchup. Crockett's game will begin around 7:00, following a 5:30 semi between South Gibson and Dyersburg.

"Our first goal this season was to host the district tournament," Jamscek said, "and now we get to do it. We get to play in front of our own fans and on our field. We believe that will get us to the region tournament, but we've got to get our offense going sooner than we have in our last two games. South Gibson has a really good team, but we should have been on the scoreboard earlier than we were."

The Hornets tallied their only goal with 8:55 remaining before halftime when SGC senior Grant Goodman found the net from the left wing. Jamscek felt the Cavs missed two golden scoring opportunities in the first half, but his intermission message to the squad was upbeat and positive, insisting that if they played their game, the scores would come.

With freshman Noah Mayfield moving into the goalkeeper position for Crockett in the second half, the Hornets had a couple of shots deflected and pushed a few others wide, bringing groans from their large crowd each time.

"Noah did a really good job for us in the second half," Jamscek said.

South Gibson was throwing everything in the book defensively at Crockett scoring leaders Luke Carter and Cerda, but Juarez finally broke the drought with his 11th goal of the season and the Hornets immediately began to sense that the tide was turning. And when Cerda's shot went in, the game was all but over. The sophomore added two assists in the game, with Braulio Marquez contributing another.

"We think we have a really good shot at getting back to the state tournament again this year," Jamscek said. "And this was the first step. We just have to keep putting better pressure on the teams we play from here on out. We're a better team when we keep attacking."

The Cavs closed the regular season portion of their schedule with a 12-1 record, including a 4-0 district mark. Through their 13 games this season, here are the statistical totals for Crockett players:

GOALS – Luke Carter 23, Christopher Cerda 16, Edgar Juarez 11, Eddy De La Rosa 8, Braulio Marquez 5, Angel Garcia 3, Leo Arreola 2, Angel Martinez 1, Jathen Young 1, Mason Wood 1;

ASSISTS – Edgar Juarez 13, Christopher Cerda 11, Braulio Marquez 9, Luke Carter 6, Angel Garcia 4, Eddy De La Rosa 4, Adrian Calderon 1, Santiago Santos 1, Leo Arreola 1, Eduardo Galvez 1, Camden Martin 1, Ossi Sanchez 1, Noah Mayfield 1.



Above: With his former coach Carli Branson looking over his left shoulder, Crockett senior captain Edgar Juarez prepares to launch the shot that broke Crockett's scoring drought and scored the Cavs' first goal in the 3-1 victory over South Gibson Tuesday evening in Medina. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Fourteen minutes later, Chris Cerda (10) -- with teammate Braulio Marquez (21) looking on -- booted this shot which hit the lunging Hornet goalkeeper's hands ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: ... and went through them, trickling ever so slowly toward the net as the goalie lay helpless on the ground ...



Above: ... and kept rolling, almost coming harmlessly to a stop ...



Above: ... finally barely crawling into the goal for a 2-1 Crockett lead with just 10:03 left to play, Chris Cerda's 16th goal of the season. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: As Chris Cerda is congratulated by teammates Angel Garcia, Adrian Calderon, and Edgar Juarez, South Gibson defender Rebel Blackwell (17) complains to the official that he was somehow pushed down on the play. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett tried to keep the pressure on as this corner kick sailed just over the head of a leaping Luke Carter (1), but the Cavs' Santiago Santos (30) was able to head it toward the net, although the Hornet goalkeeper made the save. Crockett's Jose Martinez (4) is in position for a rebound on the play. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: A newly-shorn Angel Garcia (8) was nearly unrecognizable without his trademark shaggy hair, but the 80-plus-degree temperature validated his timing on the haircut. Here he battles SGC's Grant Goodman for control of the ball. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Braulio Marquez (21) contributed a big assist to the Crockett cause as the Cavs claimed the 3-1 triumph for a 4-0 record in district play. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Cav freshman goalkeeper Noah Mayfield (in green) goes up with teammate Daniel Grajeda to deflect this corner kick from South Gibson. Mayfield came on in the second half and kept the host Hornets scoreless. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Angel Martinez was ready to mix things up early for the Cavaliers. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: South Gibson's defense threw everything they could at Crockett's Chris Cerda: triple teams, sliding players, etc. But Cerda scored one goal (the tie-breaker) and assisted on both of the others as the Cavs won 3-1 to claim the #1 seed in the upcoming district tournament. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Eddy De La Rosa (2) -- contorting his face with a villainous look on this pass to Braulio Marquez (21) -- was about to put the game on ice as Max Utley (also newly-shorn) watches in the background. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Eddy De La Rosa hurled himself into this crossing pass, intercepting it before the South Gibson goalie could grab it and smashing it into the net for the third Crockett goal of the game. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Crockett fans cheer in the background as Eddy De La Rosa crash-lands after belting the ball into the net for the put-away goal that gave the Cavs a 12-1 record for the regular season. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Cav defender Jose Martinez (4) pushes the ball up the sideline as Crockett continues on the attack after initiating its late flurry of goals. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Crockett's three goal-scorers -- Eddy De La Rosa (2), Chris Cerda (10), and Edgar Juarez (9) -- appear to be celebrating their feat. But -- ironically (and Nostradamus-ly) -- this shot was taken pre-game, in the huddle before the opening play. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Your district tournament #1 seed Crockett Cavaliers. (Photo by Carli Branson)



Above: Luke Carter, Crockett's leading scorer for the season, almost got into the goal column before this play was broken up by a sliding Hornet defender. (Photo by Ron Barry)