

"SURVIVE AND ADVANCE" ATTITUDE CARRIES SOFTBALL, BASEBALL TEAMS TO NEXT HURDLE



Above: Lady Cav catcher Lynden Cole (right) looks to the dugout to see if Coach David Barker is going to call a pitching circle conference with Crockett hurler Anna Stallings (left) after Obion County put two runners on in the sixth. But Stallings struck out the next two hitters to escape the threat and maintain the 3-1 lead. Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

One step down – two to go.

That's the journey ahead for the Crockett County softball and baseball teams in District 13-AAA Tournament play in Newbern after each squad claimed must-win victories over Obion County Friday.

Coach David Barker's softball team received a double and home run from Jayden Maddox, three hits from Brooklyn Haynes, and a strong pitching effort from Anna Stallings to defeat the Lady Rebels 3-1 and earn a date with host team Dyer County Monday evening at 5:00.

Coach Brent Fronabarger's baseballers blanked Obion 7-0 behind strong pitching from Brady Fronabarger in a game which featured a bizarre ejection of the Rebels' starting pitcher, catcher, and head coach after a classless display of discontent with the umpiring crew. Crockett jumps right back into action Saturday afternoon in a 2:30 battle with Dyersburg.

Both the softball and baseball teams must win two more games to earn berths in the district championship games, which is what it takes to qualify to advance to the regional tournament.

A recap of Friday's sports action, including Crockett's tennis teams in district tournament play in Medina...

SOFTBALL: Senior first baseman Maddox said she was beginning to put a little too much pressure on herself because she hasn't been hitting well lately, especially after the Lady Cavs dropped into the losers' bracket in the very first round.

"It was about time I did something with the bat, because it's been a while," Maddox said. "Especially after we suffered such an emotional loss the night before (a 7-4 defeat to South Gibson), I was determined that I would be more confident today and be ready from the start. It felt really good to get the homer in the first at-bat (a line-drive shot to left to lead off the second inning). We needed to start getting more runs from those of us who hit lower in the lineup."

Crockett, facing elimination after the first-game loss to South Gibson, jumped to a 1-0 edge in the first when Piper White beat out an infield single, stole second prior to a walk to Destiny Foster, stole third after a lineout, and raced home on the first of Haynes' three hits.

Maddox made it 2-0 Lady Cavs with her leadoff bomb in the second. Obion cut it to 2-1 with a fourth-frame run on a single, a walk, a sacrifice bunt, and a groundout. Crockett wasted a leadoff double by Maddox in its half of the fourth, failing to get her in from third even after a successful sacrifice bunt by Gabby Bursey.

Fortunately, the Lady Rebels weren't doing much to solve Stallings' variety of pitches, as the sophomore workhorse allowed just four hits and struck out six in going the distance.

"My change-up and screwball were both working well today, which they don't always do," said the soft-spoken Stallings. "I don't always have the confidence to use them that much, but today they were working for me."

Crockett picked up a huge insurance run in the fifth when Lynden Cole singled, Kinleigh Lamb reached on a fielding error made on her bunt, Haynes singled on a perfectly placed bunt to the right side, and Sadie Hoover delivered a sacrifice fly deep enough to left to chase home courtesy runner Tink Willis.

Maddox followed with a fly ball deep enough to right to allow both remaining baserunners to advance to second and third, but a lineout ended the threat.

Obion tried to rally in the sixth with an infield error and a double down the left-field line, but Stallings struck out the final two batters of the frame to escape the jam, and then cruised through the seventh.

"We've been hitting too many pop-ups and fly balls, instead of line drives and hard ground balls that force the defense to make plays," Barker said. "We have to do better in that area. But we survived and advanced, and that's what it takes from now on."

Barker's team went to the State Tournament last season without losing a single game in the district or region tournaments, so facing elimination games so soon is a new experience for his girls.

"Maybe it will be good for us to have to fight our way through this thing," Barker said. "But it can feel like you're the third monkey on the ramp into Noah's ark and it's starting to rain."

If the Lady Cavs can defeat the Lady Choctaws Monday, they'd face Dyersburg Tuesday at 5:00 for a berth in the district championship against South Gibson, which edged the Lady Trojans 4-2 Friday night. Crockett is now 19-12-1 on the season.



Above: Crockett outfielder Brooklyn Haynes went 3-for-3, drove in the game's first run, and stole a base for the victorious Lady Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)

BASEBALL: Sophomore southpaw Brady Fronabarger was in complete control during his six shutout innings Friday, limiting Obion to just five hits and three walks while striking out six. Tyler Rathbun finished up with a one-hit

scoreless inning, and the Cavs used a balanced offensive attack that scored in four different frames to record the victory.

Crockett jumped in front on a two-run, bases-loaded single by Joseph Gould in the first. The Cavs got two more in the third on an infield error, a Fronabarger double, an RBI single by Carter Winders, and a fly ball by Callan Willis that scored courtesy runner Sam Proctor.

Crockett made it 5-0 in the fourth when Grayson Lambert singled, moved around to third on two groundouts, and came home on a single to left by Blaine Nichols. After that, things got weird.

Obion's starting pitcher Thomas Yates - who'd been grumbling about the strike zone much of the afternoon - struck out to end the top of the fifth, and was upset by strikes called against him while hitting. When he threw his first pitch in the bottom of the fifth, catcher Ethan Smith pretended to be fielding a breaking ball in the dirt as the actual toss - a fastball - crashed directly into the face mask of the home plate umpire. Yates, Smith, and Coach Richard Collins were immediately ejected by the base umpire.

Following a battery change for the Rebels, Winders slammed a triple and courtesy runner Proctor scored on a single by Willis to make it 6-0. Gould and Lambert both walked to set up a sacrifice fly by Landon Wicker for the final Cav tally in the 7-0 win that improved the season record to 12-10-1.

Crockett faces another elimination duel in the 2:30 Saturday matchup with Dyersburg.

TENNIS: While the potential district championship match between Crockett teammates Izzy Yearwood and Brennan Morris didn't materialize, both Lady Cavs earned all-district honors by finishing tied for third after being defeated in their semifinal encounters.

Yearwood lost to Chester County's Katie Lovelace and Morris fell to Hardin County's Emma Austin. Both Crockett players had gained semifinal berths by each winning two individual singles matches Thursday in the competition held at South Gibson in Medina.



Above: Crockett senior first baseman Jayden Maddox -- who had homered in her first at-bat -- watches her leadoff double sail to the right-center field fence in the bottom of the fourth. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Jayden Maddox will remember Game 2 of the 13-AAA District Tournament as the one in which she mashed this home run ball in the second inning. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Junior Sadie Hoover watches her bases-loaded sacrifice fly drive home a key insurance run in the bottom of the fifth inning for Crockett ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: ... as it chased home courtesy runner Tink Willis, who was on base for Lynden Cole, who had singled to begin the frame. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: But it was Anna Stallings, with the command of her pitches, that stood out among the Lady Cav performances, along with the hitting of Maddox and Haynes. (Photo by Ron Barry)



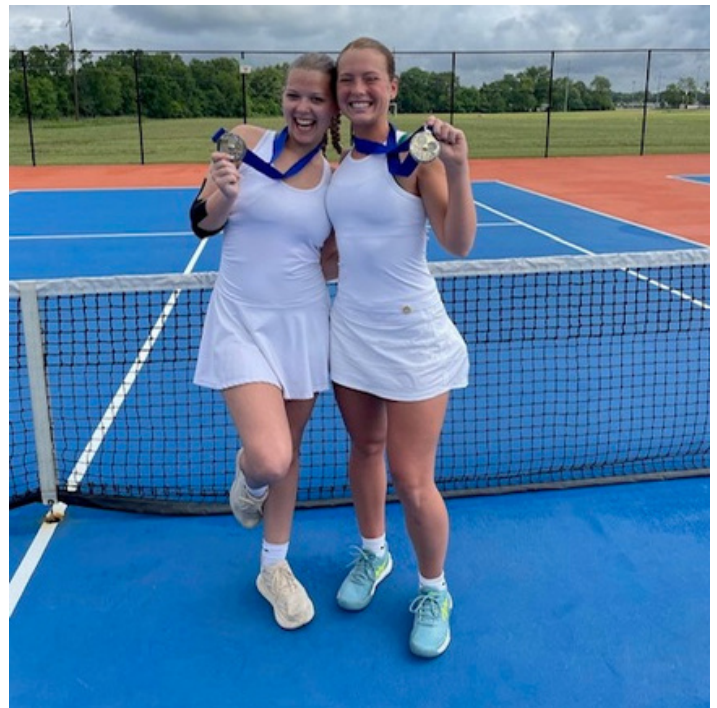
Above: Crockett catcher Carter Winders was 2-for-2 with a triple, a walk, and a run batted in for the Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Joseph Gould got the scoring started for the Cavaliers with a two-run, bases-loaded single in the opening frame. It was all the Crockett pitching needed. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Six shutout innings from Brady Fronabarger sparked Crockett's baseballers to an elimination game win over Obion County 7-0 in Newbern Friday. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: : Lady Cavalier tennis players Brennan Morris (left) and Izzy Yearwood flash their All-District Tournament hardware after finishing tied for third and earning the honors in the event held in Medina. (Photo courtesy of Sarah Kennedy)