

ANOTHER LONG NIGHT AT THE FOOTBALL FIELD, BUT ANOTHER CAVALIER WIN



Above: Zerafin Guardian (76) had Ross McDaniel running for his life on this play to escape another sack. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The evening had started in bright and sunny conditions as Carson Bridger (79) crashed through the cheer team's sign even before flag-bearer Gareth Rawson had time to start running. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Friday night's football game at Lexington took so long to play that when it was finished, a local church hosted a FIFTEENTH Quarter. *Rimshot*

If you thought the season opener at Jackson North Side took a long time to play – and it DID – that game was still an Olympic sprint compared to this one. There were two lightning delays and an additional time frame waiting for “one last small cell to pass through” – the public address announcer's exact words – and that “small cell” resembled a monsoon in a Brazilian rain forest, sending spectators on both sides running for cover.

But, when it was all over after close to a four-hour run time, Crockett County outlasted the Big Red 28-6 for its third win in three starts this season, displaying a focus and perseverance that will serve the Cavaliers well if they can sustain it.

The visiting Cavs were clinging to a tenuous 7-3 halftime advantage when, at the conclusion of the intermission, officials announced that lightning was close enough to Lexington's newly refurbished stadium to invoke the 30-minute delay rule.

The Tiger stadium personnel decided to use the delay to shoot off the fireworks program they had originally planned for post-game entertainment.

A light sprinkle had begun by then, and officials added a second 30-minute lightning delay. Somewhere around the middle of Delay #2, the skies opened up and dumped the month's worth of rain we never got in August, much of it blowing sideways as fans scurried to find shelter.

Meanwhile, according to Cav head coach Kevin Ward, his coaching staff was huddled inside the locker room studying a video playback of the first half and forming a strategy for the remainder of the contest.

“I am so proud of our staff for the adjustments we made while watching the video,” he said after Crockett outscored Lexington 21-3 in the second half. “Our players endured the difficulty of all the delays and executed the adjustments very well. It wasn't perfect, but I was proud of the way they kept their focus and got the job done again. Road wins are hard to come by, and I never take them for granted.”

The Cavaliers had fallen behind 3-0 on a 28-yard field goal by the Tigers' Matthew Fesmire late in the first quarter and were struggling to generate much of an offense at all until facing a fourth-down-and-five situation at the Lexington 43. Avery Hurst came in to punt, but Crockett snapped the ball to the upback Deuce Greenhill instead, who used the element of surprise to launch a 28-yard gallop to the Big Red 15.

From there, two carries each by Amarion Hobson and DK Woods advanced the ball to the one, and the Cavs then executed the “tush push” play – a quarterback sneak by Ben Burgess, with his backfield mates pushing him from behind – to finally get on the scoreboard with 4:19 left before the half. Hurst's extra point made it 7-3.

Crockett's Demo Pickens ensured the Cavs would hold the halftime edge when he perfectly timed his move and intercepted a Ross McDaniel pass with a dive at the Cav four with just 47 seconds remaining.

Following performances by the marching bands of both schools, the two lightning delays, the fireworks show, the sudden downpour, and a ten-minute warm-up period for the teams to get loose again,

the game resumed with considerably less people in the Lexington stands while the majority of the Cav faithful were just that: faithful.

And they were rewarded when, after allowing a couple of first downs, Crockett's defense stiffened near midfield and forced a Jakob Davis punt, which Pickens returned 15 yards to the Cav 27. On a third-and-nine play, Burgess faked a flare pass to the right to Pickens and turned to the opposite side for a quick throw to Greenhill, who then scampered 72 yards to the end zone on a diagonal race across the field. Hurst's ensuing boot made it 14-3 at the 5:34 mark of the third period.

Lexington responded with a lengthy but time-consuming drive from its own 11 to the Crockett 17, but Pickens broke up a third-down pass and the Tigers decided to bring on Fesmire to kick the 34-yard field goal that narrowed the margin to 14-6. The drive took almost nine minutes off the game clock, however, which benefitted the Cavs almost as much as having another possession.

When Ward's club did get the ball back, one of the halftime adjustments became immediately apparent. Greenhill was lining up as a running back rather than as a wide receiver, and he carried five times for 27 yards on a march – keyed by a 25-yard Burgess-to-Dre Walker pass play – that culminated with a 16-yard touchdown run by Woods on a misdirection play to the right. The extra point by Hurst gave the Cavs a 21-6 lead with only 3:57 left to play in the game.

Hurst boomed the ensuing kickoff into the end zone – he did it on four of his five boots, with the other being returned from the three – and Lexington was forced to begin throwing the ball more, which is not a strength of its offense. Three incompletions and a penalty followed, forcing a punt which Pickens fielded at the 50 and brought it back 46 yards to the Big Red four.

After a penalty against the Cavs, Woods took a third-down handoff around the left side, shook off a couple of potential tacklers, stepped out of an arm tackle near the sideline, and then bulled his way the final 10 of the 17 yards he covered, running through a goal line collision to post the touchdown. Hurst's extra put the finishing touch on the 28-6 triumph.

Greenhill totaled 148 yards for the game, with 64 on the ground and 84 from the passing game. Woods added 73 yards rushing, along with his two touchdowns. Burgess finished with 120 yards passing, completing seven of his 10 throws.

Crockett hits the road again Friday night at Jackson South Side. Both teams have beaten Ripley this season by similar margins, but South Side lost to a much improved JCM squad and had its game with Liberty this week canceled by persistent lightning during the first quarter.

Final Statistics

Rushes-Yards: CC – DK Woods 13-73, Deuce Greenhill 7-64, Demo Pickens 2-5, Amarion Hobson 4-5, Ben Burgess 5-(-1), **Team 31-146. LEX** – Amarnold 22-100, Ross McDaniel 16-67, Jayden Fry 2-6, Jonathan Pritchard 2-5, **Team 42-178.**

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC – Burgess 7-10-120-0. **LEX** – McDaniel 7-14-55-1.

Receptions-Yards: CC – Greenhill 4-84, Dre Walker 1-25, Demo Pickens 2-11. **LEX** – Arnold 3-34, Elye Pearson 3-15, Brady McEarl 1-6.

Interceptions: CC – Demo Pickens 1-0. **LEX** – None.

Kickoff Returns-Yards: CC – Demo Pickens 2-30, **Team 2-30. LEX** – Arnold 1-18.

Punt Returns-Yards: CC – Demo Pickens 2-61. **LEX** – Pearson 1-5.

Total Scrimmage Plays-Yards: CC 41-266, LEX 56-233.

First Downs: CC 6, LEX 13.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 0-0, LEX 0-0.

Penalties-Yards: CC 4-32, LEX 7-55.

Punts-Yards: CC – Avery Hurst 2-54-27.0. **LEX** – Jakob Davis 3-124-41.3.

Points (TD-2PC-XP-FG-P): Greenhill 2-0-0-0-12, Woods 2-0-0-0-12, Greenhill 1-0-0-0-6, Burgess 1-0-0-0-6, Hurst 0-0-4-0-4, Team 4-0-4-0-28. Opponents 0-0-0-2-6.

Season Statistics (Record: 3-0)

Rushes-Yards: CC – DK Woods 51-312, Deuce Greenhill 17-262, Demo Pickens 7-44, Gabe Dupree 12-34, Amarion Hobson 6-14, Ben Burgess 23-(-7), **Team 116-659. Opponents 109-529.**

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC – Burgess 19-30-323-2. **Opponents 30-53-351-5.**

Receptions-Yards: CC – Dre Walker 7-159, Greenhill 8-121-1 TD, Demo Pickens 3-35-1 TD, Karsen Burgess 1-8, **Team 19-323. Opponents 30-351.**

Interceptions: CC – Demo Pickens 2-49, Woods 1-12, Walker 1-10, Greenhill 1-0, **Team 5-71. Opponents 2-103-1 TD.**

Kickoff Returns-Yards: CC – Demo Pickens 5-144, Squirt Pickens 2-37, Luke Beaird 1-8, **Team 8-189. Opponents 5-96.**

Punt Returns-Yards: CC – Demo Pickens 4-79, **Team 4-79. Opponents 3-26.**

Total Scrimmage Plays-Yards: CC 144-982. Opponents 162-880.

First Downs: CC 29, Opponents 39.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 2-2, Opponents 5-3.

Penalties-Yards: CC 20-137, Opponents 24-180.

Punts-Yards: CC – Avery Hurst 6-227-37.8. **Opponents 8-289-36.1.**

Points (TD-2PC-XP-FG-P): Woods 5-0-0-0-30, Greenhill 4-0-0-0-24, Hurst 0-0-10-1-13, Burgess 2-0-0-0-12, Demo Pickens 1-0-0-0-6, Walker 0-1-0-0-2, Team 12-1-10-1-87. Opponents 7-2-2-2-54

Below: This is what it looks like to a defense trying to stop Crockett's DK Woods: one guy is already on the ground, others are lining up to try their turn, and Cavalier blockers Austin Carroll (56), Randle Perry (50), Carson Bridger (79), and Dre Walker (6) are on the way over to provide additional help. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Cavalier quarterback Ben Burgess (10) came out throwing quick passes to his slot receivers. Here, protected by the blocking of Carson Bridger (79) and DK Woods (32), Burgess pops a quick hitter out to the left ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Early on, Crockett's defense faced a challenge from Lexington's running game. The Cavs had success on this play as Carson Bridger (79) drags down the Tigers' Amarion Arnold (3) as Amarion Hobson (4), DK Woods (32), and Nolen Turner (54) arrive to help out. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: This was the type of play that forced Lexington to have to kick a field goal on its first possession. The Big Red's Amarion Arnold is stacked up by a gang of Cavaliers, notably Jake Knox (35), Austin Carroll (56), Zerafin Guardian (76), Amarion Hobson (4), and Carson Bridger (79), with Ian Greenberg (19) and DK Woods (32) fighting through blockers on the perimeter to try to lend assistance. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... where it's snared by Demo Pickens (3), who might have had a touchdown if he could have escaped this Lexington tackle. Pickens had a big impact on the game from both sides of the ball. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Crockett prevented an early score here when Demo Pickens (3) was the last defender with a shot at Lexington quarterback Ross McDaniel, but Pickens managed to knock him out of bounds with this hit. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Matthew Fesmire (48), one of West Tennessee's top kickers, put the host Tigers up 3-0 with this 28-yard field goal out of the hold of Jakob Davis (13), getting it over the block attempt by Dre Walker (6). (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Crockett finally got on the scoreboard with 4:19 left before halftime on this "Tush Push" quarterback sneak by Ben Burgess, who is somewhere underneath this pile of humanity as his teammates Karsen Burgess (2), Amarion Hobson (4), Randle Perry (50), Zerafin Guardian (76), Austin Carroll (56), Colton Mayo (52), and Dre Walker (6) are either trying to clear the way or push Burgess over from behind. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Demo Pickens preserved the halftime advantage for Crockett when he dove in front of Lexington receiver Freddy Vega (11) to intercept this Ross McDaniel pass at the Cav 4-yard-line with just 47 seconds remaining. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The Cav offense then got rolling when Deuce Greenhill (7) took a short flare pass from Ben Burgess, cut to the open middle of the field, and then outraced everybody to the house for a 72-yard touchdown. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: After another Matthew Fesmire field goal narrowed the Cav margin to 14-6, Deuce Greenhill (7) moved to a running back position and carried the ball five times on a march toward the Tiger end zone, here benefiting from the blocking of Randle Perry (50), Dre Walker (6), Colton Mayo (52), Carson Bridger (79), Travis Cork (72), and Austin Carroll (56) as the scoreboard tells the situation. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: By halftime, the cheer squad was in need of refreshment as they watch the performance of the Crockett Marching Cavaliers while rehydrating. Soon the skies would open up, and a total reset would be necessary. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: When the third quarter finally began, Crockett's adjustments began to pay off, as demonstrated by this defensive gem from Austin Carroll (56). Carroll somehow slid right through the Big Red blockers to sack Lexington's Ross McDaniel before he could even get going, while other Cav defenders Zerafin Guardian (76), Jake Knox (35), and Nolen Turner (54) are also looking for their way into the backfield. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: That march concluded when DK Woods (32) took this handoff from Ben Burgess (10) and cut around blocks from Carson Bridger (79) and Austin Carroll (56) to scoot 16 yards into the end zone with 3:57 to play. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The final tally came as pictured in this sequence when DK Woods (32) took this handoff from Ben Burgess (10) and ran left behind the blocks of Dre Walker (6) and Jake Knox (35), ... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... freeing Woods up to reach the goal line, where he rammed through this collision with Lexington's Elye Pearson (5) to give the Cavs a three-touchdown margin. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: DK Woods returns to the extra point huddle after sealing Crockett's win by scoring his second touchdown with only 2:27 remaining on the clock. Woods had 73 yards on 13 carries. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Earlier, Crockett had forced the second Big Red field goal when Demo Pickens (3) broke up this third-down pass play with another outstanding effort. Then, after the Cavs had gone ahead 21-6, he returned a punt 46 yards to set up the team's final touchdown. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... Woods was briefly slowed down at the Tiger 10, but powered his way through this arm tackle as more blocking help arrived from Carson Bridger (76), Jake Knox (35), Travis Cork (72), and Austin Carroll (56), ... (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Another key to the Crockett win was the kicking of Avery Hurst (85), who nailed all four of his extra points and slammed four of his five kickoffs into the end zone. On this one, aided by a 15-yard penalty prior to it, Hurst kicked it over the end zone fence and nailed a trio of teenage girls who were headed for the exit. Laithon Bonds (24) is alongside Hurst on the final boot. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett's Nolen Turner (54) almost sacked Lexington's Ross McDaniel (2) before he barely got this pass away. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett linebacker Jake Knox (35) helped lead a fierce resurgence after all the halftime delays, making several tackles ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Head coach Kevin Ward jokes with officials while his team warms up following the lightning delays and rainstorm. Ward said the adjustments his staff made during the halftime intermission were a big reason for the win. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Cav lineman Colton Mayo (52), after congratulating quarterback Ben Burgess (10) on the sideline after the final drive, turns his attention back toward the field for the game's final plays. Behind Mayo and Burgess are Titus Luten (38), Mason Dennis (12), Laithon Bonds (24), Josh Carlson (68), and Colin Smith (53). (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: ... including this one of Lexington's Ross McDaniel. Jake Knox (35) is joined on this stop by Dre Walker (6), Austin Carroll (56), Zerafin Guardian (76), DK Woods (32), and Nolen Turner (54). (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Two final memories from one of the longest games (in terms of time consumed) ever played: first, Avery Hurst (85) bangs one of his dependable extra points straight through the goalpost uprights ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: ...and Deuce Greenhill (7) is once again in the open field as Travis Cork (72) is about to lower the boom on Lexington's Brady McEarl (4) in front of the Tigers' "Blackout" crowd. Greenhill compiled 148 yards of total offense on just 11 touches of the ball. (Photo by Ron Barry)