

RUTH GOURLEY GOAL PROPELS CCMS SOCCER TO NEXT REGION TOURNAMENT ROUND



Above: Executing the shot that produced the game's lone goal and sent CCMS into the second round of the West Tennessee Region Tournament, Ruth Gourley drives the ball past Huntingdon's diving goalie (her foot is visible at the far left). (Photo by Ron Barry)arms, shaving 90 seconds off her previous best time. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: An excited Ruth Gourley is joined by an equally enthusiastic Caroline Scruggs after Gourley scored to give the Lady Cavs a 1-0 lead in the second half Saturday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Crockett County Middle School girls soccer coach Doug Wede measured his words carefully when trying to describe what a player's innate intelligence can mean to a team.

In this case, he was trying to assess the difference that Ruth Gourley makes to the current Lady Cavalier club, a squad that certainly has more than its share of exceptional players. Wede had just watched his Crockett unit eliminate a talented Huntingdon group 1-0 in the opening round of the West Tennessee Regional Tournament – on a goal by Gourley 10 minutes into the second half Saturday at Cavalier Stadium.

Gourley had intercepted a Fillies' pass near midfield and engineered a breakaway toward the Huntingdon goal, with several yards of open space between her and the Fillies' goalie. Remaining calm and poised along her run, Gourley watched the keeper until she determined just the right time to launch her shot, a sliding drive into the right corner of the net just out of the reach of the diving defender.

"First of all, for Ruth to have the presence of mind to advance the ball that far without ever feeling rushed is a testament to her mind," Wede said. "She took the ball just far enough to put the keeper at a disadvantage, and then made sure she drove completely through the ball, sacrificing a turf burn to do it. Very few players could make that play with the thought that she put into it."

But, Wede said, it didn't surprise him, because that's pretty much how Gourley is all the time.

"She obviously knows the game of soccer," he said. After all, her mother Mary Kate is an assistant coach for the team and her sister Kate was a standout player for the high school throughout her career there. "But Ruth shows this awareness away from the field too. She's a straight-A student and she even leads a weekly Bible study before school begins every Monday (with Wede's daughter Hannah, the Lady Cavs' equally savvy goaltender).

"And when we get a lead, like today, we can drop her back into a midfield position and know that the other team will have a hard time getting anything going after that, because Ruth will always be in the right spot to break it up or she will have directed someone else into the best defensive position. It's just what she does. Her intelligence helps this team in so many ways.

Even though Gourley netted the lone goal Saturday, Crockett's win featured important contributions from a variety of players.

Hannah Wede made three outstanding saves in the opening half, each of which required a diving deflection out of bounds. Nataly Amador, still learning the sport after playing softball most of her youth, was a defensive dynamo on Crockett's left side, taking away Huntingdon's preference to attack with right-footed strikers. And Doug Wede had glowing words for seventh grader Caleigh Howell, thrust into the starting lineup due to an injury to stead Charlee Lewis at the center middle position.

"Caleigh really played well for us today, especially with not a lot of experience in doing what we were asking of her in that spot," Wede said. "But she handled the duties exceptionally well until we had to take her out after her injury." Howell took a direct hit to the face while blocking a point-blank kick from a Huntingdon player, just another example of the fearlessness with which she plays.

And while they didn't score, Lady Cav attackers Kalynn Lewis, Caroline Scruggs, and Olivia Barger made several surges that eventually broke down the Huntingdon resistance, helping to produce Gourley's second-half breakaway. Crockett's defensive backfield, led by Amy Mena, made adjustments so well the visiting Fillies didn't even get a shot on goal in the second half.

The triumph moves Crockett into the Region's Round 2 Thursday night in Alamo, where the Lady Cavs will play the winner of a Monday game between Henry County and Martin.

CCHS VOLLEYBALL: Crockett's volleyball team captured second place in its own invitational tournament Saturday in Alamo, winning five consecutive matches before falling in the championship final against Camden.

The Lady Cavs defeated West Carroll, Jackson South Side, Brighton, TCA, and Gibson County in succession to gain the championship berth, but Camden's unit – a team with a current record of 26-3 – proved to be too much at the end of a long day.

Coach Andrew Laman's squad hosts powerful district foe Dyer County Tuesday evening in a key battle.



Above: Crockett received stellar play from seventh grader Caleigh Howell (20), moved into a starting role in place of the injured Charlee Lewis. Howell filled her shoes admirably until suffering her own injury, from a ball directly into her face early in the second half. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett goalie Hannah Wede had to make three diving stops to deflect Huntingdon shots out of bounds in the first half; the Lady Cavs then shored up the defense, and Wede didn't face any second-half challenges. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Crockett's Nataly Amador (18) defends her position against a Huntingdon throw-in Saturday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below : At game's end, the Crockett team linked arms and slowly strode across the pitch to greet their fans on the east side of Cavalier Stadium. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Lady Cav sixth grader Kalynn Lewis (25) tries to make her way past the Fillies' defense. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Caleigh Howell (20) deflects a Huntingdon pass and sets it on its course to go the other way. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Olivia Barger (4) ignores a loose shoelace and tries to drive a forwarding pass upfield toward the goal box during a first-half Crockett push Saturday. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Olivia Barger, the Lady Cavs' Energizer Bunny who never runs out of steam, checks the alignment while awaiting a throw-in from a teammate. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Nataly Amador (18) redirects a ball in an attempt to elude a Huntingdon defender. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Zooming in on the post-game line of thanks, it was smiles all around for (left to right) Hannah Wede, Ruth Gourley, Nataly Amador, and Amy Mena. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett's Marley Thornton (10) and Caroline Scruggs (1) were happy campers as well. They'll play again Thursday night in Alamo. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Kalynn Lewis (25), Crockett's leading scorer during the regular season, drew a lot of attention from the Fillies' defense. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Once Crockett got the lead, Ruth Gourley (3) shifted to a center midfielder position, successfully preventing Huntingdon attacks like this one from developing into serious threats. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Coach Doug Wede has led his CCMS team to a 12-1 record; Crockett has outscored its opponents 52-3 thus far. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Lady Cav goalkeeper Hannah Wede, here smacking a goal kick back onto the field to initiate a new play, was basically relegated to cheerleader status in the second half as Crockett's defensive backfield tightened its containment. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett freshman Wesley Thornton drove this set-up for a successful kill Saturday in the Lady Cavs' own tournament. Looking on are Keeton Holyfield (far left), Sadie Hoover (1), and Piper White (6). (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Sadie Hoover sets a potential kill shot for either Madi Collins (in the middle) or Wesley Thornton (from the left side)... (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... and is still smiling about the resulting kill when she goes to serve the next point. Crockett won five straight matches to advance to the tournament final Saturday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Piper White reacts to a comment from the front row as she prepares to return the opponents' serve. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: It's not an official Crockett volleyball match without Dee Cole (15) hammering a few kill shots. This one is delivered surrounded by teammates Halle Holyfield (30), Piper White (6), and Ava Lee (10). (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The Lady Cavs' Halle Holyfield reacts to a teammate's comment behind her while awaiting the next serve. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Left: Crockett's Brennan Morris dives on the floor in an attempt to dig this Jackson South Side shot as Katherine West (3) and Madi Collins (16) try to react to the ball's sudden flight. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Jordyn Maddox (13) congratulates her teammates after a win over South Side. From left are Sadie Hoover (1), Madi Collins (16), Dee Cole (15), and Wesley Thornton (right).



Above: Keeton Holyfield (14) completely stuffs this South Side shot attempt as Sadie Hoover (1) and Ava Lee (10) provide support, (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett's Ava Lee (right) yuks it up with Keeton Holyfield and Sadie Hoover after delivering a touch shot for a winning point against Jackson South Side Saturday. (Photo by Ron Barry)