

CAVS "SURVIVE AND ADVANCE" 17-6; REMATCH WITH DYER COUNTY UP NEXT



Above: Now that it's November, these Kirby tacklers each have one of DK Woods' legs and may be preparing to make a wish as they tug in opposite directions. If their wish was for Woods going down easily, it wasn't accomplished. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Crockett County head football coach Kevin Ward knows that playoff wins are hard to come by. He also knows – and said so – that if his Cavaliers play the next one like the first one, their season will be over.

Honestly feeling as if he should apologize to any Crockett fans who traveled to Memphis for having to sit through the double-ugly 17-6 win over Kirby High School in the opening round of the TSSAA playoffs, Ward did manage to find some reason for optimism after reflecting on some of his past seasons.

“I’ve had some teams before that really struggled in the first round games,” he said, “but then came on in the next week to play really well. I’m certainly hoping that’s the case with this team, because if we play at Dyer County like we played tonight, we’re going to get shellacked.”

Ward said the entire night was just “off” a bit for the Cavaliers, but it was still not an excuse to play without the intensity a playoff team needs to possess.

“Kids like routine,” Ward said, “but there was nothing routine tonight. First it was the longer-than-usual bus trip, and then we had traffic delays. Our dressing room is far away from the field, so we didn’t go back there pre-game or at halftime. All of it contributed to our play, but I could feel it earlier than any of that. We just didn’t prepare as well as we should have, and our intensity was just missing out on the field.

“But – we’re 1-0 this week, and if we go 1-0 again next week we’ll be in the State 4-A quarterfinals. We feel like we had a real chance to beat Dyer County in the regular season, but we kept shooting ourselves in the foot in that game (a 21-7 defeat to a team that really came on strong after that contest). If we prepare the right way, and we get our intensity back to where it needs to be, we can have a solid chance to keep moving forward.”

Dyer County won its first-round game convincingly over Memphis Ridgeway, posting a 53-28 victory after rolling to a 27-0 advantage in the opening quarter.

Against Kirby, Crockett went the entire first half with only a single first down and collected just 36 rushing yards on 26 carries for the entire game. Fortunately for the Cavaliers, the most effective part of their passing game – short, quick throws from quarterback Ben Burgess to speedy receivers with the ability to add on yardage – worked often enough to key the win.

But none of it was working early, despite the Cavs forcing two first-half turnovers: a fumble recovery by Austin Carroll and an interception by Amaron Hobson. Following Hobson’s pick, which occurred on the second play of the second quarter, Crockett had to punt the ball away and then allowed the homestanding Cougars to march 52 yards in nine plays for a touchdown. Tiny but elusive running back Tre Copeland scored it from 18 yards out, utilizing an uncanny ability to stop, start, and switch directions instantly, leaving Cav tacklers grabbing air on several occasions.

Copeland’s tally with 4:47 left in the first half was followed by a failed two-point conversion, however, giving Crockett an open door – with dependable kicker Avery Hurst – to grab an edge if it could just get some offense going.

A fourth-and-two gamble from their own 35 by the Cavs – resulting in a nine-yard pass completion from Burgess to Demo Pickens – may have been the impetus the visitors needed. Two plays later – out of a third-and-19 situation following a sack – Burgess flicked a quick slant pass left to flanker Deuce Greenhill, who caught the ball just past the line of scrimmage, continued heading toward the right side of the field, then cut back to the middle as linemen Carroll and Randle Perry worked their way out into the pattern to provide blocking.

As Greenhill worked more toward the middle, his speed began to become more of a factor, and he simply outran the last two Kirby players who had a shot at him, completing a 65-yard touchdown gallop with just 54 seconds remaining before the intermission. When Hurst added the extra point, Crockett held a 7-6 halftime lead.

The Cav defense stiffened over the final two quarters, holding the Cougars without a single first down. The longest second-half gain achieved by Kirby was a seven-yard run by quarterback Jayden Coleman, and that came on a third-and-22 play from near his own goal line.

By that time, Crockett’s advantage was 10-6, thanks to a 30-yard field goal by Hurst after a 26-yard punt return by Pickens set it up. The boot came with 6:13 remaining in the third period and was standing until the Cavs were on the field for a similar attempt with 6:51 left in the game – but this time the snap was low and hit the ground before holder Kris Phillips could place it. He was tackled at the Kirby 20.

The hosts couldn't move it and were even penalized twice before punter Kobe Gardner shanked a 13-yarder, giving Crockett the ball back at the Cougar 27. After a Crockett penalty – one of 10 the Cavs had in the game, illustrating Ward's "lack of intensity" quotes – Pickens turned another quick Burgess pass into a 37-yard scamper to the Kirby one. Running back DK Woods took a direct snap from center from the Wildcat formation and scored from there, providing the game's final touchdown with 3:31 to play.

Greenhill intercepted a Coleman pass on Kirby's next play from scrimmage to seal the decision, but it took four runs for 32 yards by Hobson to overcome a couple of Crockett infractions and run the clock down.

Burgess finished with 159 passing yards on 10 completions in 14 throws, again mostly on quick shots that his receivers turned into more sizeable yardage. Greenhill had 74 yards on his three catches and Pickens and Karsen Burgess added 46 and 27 yards, respectively.

A major task facing Crockett in the playoff rematch with Dyer County is finding a way to contain steamrolling Choctaw running back Ja'bari Livingston, who torched the Cavs for 206 yards and two touchdowns on 23 carries.

Final Statistics

Rushes-Yards: CC – DK Woods 15-37-1 TD, Amarion Hobson 4-32, Demo Pickens 1-3, Deuce Greenhill 1-(-2), bad snap 1-(-11), Ben Burgess 4-(-23), **Team 26-36. KIR** – Tre Copeland 18-84-1 TD, Jayden Coleman 10-35, Brandon Black 1-6, Kendall Hill 2-5, Christian Jefferson 1-(-2), **Team 32-129.**

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC – Burgess 10-14-159-1, **Team 10-14-159-1. KIR** – Black 3-6-23-1, Coleman 1-6-16-1, **Team 4-12-39-2.**

Receptions-Yards: CC – Greenhill 3-74-1 TD, Demo Pickens 2-46, Karsen Burgess 3-27, Dre Walker 1-6, DK Woods 1-6. **KIR** – Tavarious Burns 2-26, Copeland 1-13, Coleman 1-0.

Interceptions: CC – Hobson 1-0, Greenhill 1-2, **Team 2-2. KIR** – Coleman 1-0.

Kickoff Returns-Yards: CC – Demo Pickens 1-17, **Team 1-17. KIR** – Black 1-25, Coleman 1-15, **Team 2-40.**

Punt Returns-Yards: CC – Demo Pickens 1-26. **KIR** – Burns 1-1.

Total Scrimmage Plays-Yards: CC 40-195, KIR 44-167.

First Downs: CC 5, KIR 7.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 1-0, KIR 1-1.

Penalties-Yards: CC 10-75, KIR 9-60.

Punts-Yards: CC – Avery Hurst 3-119-39.7. **KIR** – Kobe Gardner 4-111-27.8.

Points (TD-2PC-XP-FG-P): Woods 1-0-0-0-6, Greenhill 1-0-0-0-6, Avery Hurst 0-0-2-1-5, Team 2-0-2-1-17. KIR 1-0-0-6.

Season Statistics (Record: 8-3; Region 2-2)

Rushes-Yards: CC – DK Woods 174-1,115, Deuce Greenhill 39-414, Amarion Hobson 15-112, Demo Pickens 17-103, Gabe Dupree 24-88, Khalan Thomas 5-40, Dre Walker 5-20, Travis Cork 1-1, DJ Forrest 2-0, Kris Phillips 1-(-3), bad snap 2-(-37), Ben Burgess 76-(-40), **Team 361-1,813. Opponents 366-1,918.**

Passing (Comp-Att-Yds-Int): CC – Burgess 87-156-1,337-7, Phillips 1-1-27-0, **Team 88-157-1,364-7. Opponents 83-161-1,092-16.**

Receptions-Yards: CC – Deuce Greenhill 23-517-4 TD, Dre Walker 30-459-5 TD, Demo Pickens 14-186-2 TD, Kris Phillips 1-61, DK Woods 8-45, Karsen Burgess 4-35, Amarion Hobson 3-24-1 TD, Squirt Pickens 2-17, Laithon Bonds 1-9, Brody Parlow 1-7, Gabe Dupree 1-4, **Team 88-1,364. Opponents 83-1,092.**

Interceptions: CC – Dupree 3-55-1 TD, Demo Pickens 3-49, Walker 2-47, Greenhill 2-2, Ian Greenberg 2-0, Woods 1-12, Jake Knox 1-10, Randle Perry 1-8, Hobson 1-0, **Team 16-183-1 TD. Opponents 7-160-2 TD.**

Kickoff Returns-Yards: CC – Demo Pickens 17-514-2 TD, Squirt Pickens 10-210, Greenhill 1-80-1 TD, Luke Beaird 1-8, **Team 30-812-3 TD. Opponents 31-752-1 TD.**

Punt Returns-Yards: CC – Demo Pickens 9-129, **Team 9-129. Opponents 10-168-1 TD.**

Total Scrimmage Plays-Yards: CC 516-3,177. Opponents 528-3,010.

First Downs: CC 107, Opponents 121.

Fumbles-Lost: CC 20-5, Opponents 31-12.

Penalties-Yards: CC 53-407, Opponents 86-637.

Punts-Yards: CC – Avery Hurst 22-848-38.5. **Opponents 31-1,031-33.3.**

Points (TD-2PC-XP-FG-P): Woods 18-1-0-0-110, Greenhill 9-0-0-0-54, Hurst 0-0-36-4-48, Walker 5-1-0-0-32, Demo Pickens 4-0-0-0-24, Hobson 2-0-0-0-12, Burgess 2-0-0-0-12, Dupree 1-0-0-0-6, Thomas 1-0-0-0-6, **Team 42-2-36-4-304. Opponents 25-5-11-3-180.**



Above: The game's biggest turning point for Crockett was when Deuce Greenhill (7) shared this quick slant pass from Ben Burgess and proceeded to turn it into a 65-yard touchdown reception, giving the Cavaliers a 7-6 lead just before the end of the first half. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: During a timeout, Cav center Austin Carroll gets some instruction from Crockett offensive coordinator David Barker. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Cav wide receiver Karsen Burgess (2) -- who caught three passes for 27 yards -- heads upfield after snaring a toss from his brother, quarterback Ben Burgess. Crockett's Brooks Harris (73) is in the background, having provided pass protection. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Demo Pickens (3) tries to keep his footing while cutting behind a Randle Perry (50) block after a quick pass reception. Carson Bridger (79) is also arriving to provide some interference. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett's Avery Hurst (85) booted a key 30-yard field goal midway through the third quarter out of the hold of Kris Phillips (16) to increase the Cav lead to 10-6. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The biggest dilemma for Crockett in the first half was the Barry Sanders-like running of Kirby's tiny Tre Copeland (4), who had Cav tacklers diving and missing due to his amazing ability to change directions at any speed. Here Squirt Pickens (23) and Jake Knox (35) have been escaped by the Cougar back, and he's about to do the same to Austin Carroll (56) and Nolen Turner (54). Copeland ran for 84 yards on 18 carries. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett had more success limiting Tre Copeland's running in the second half. Here, Kirby's speedster doesn't have much room to roam as he's surrounded by Dre Walker (6), Joshua Simmons (78), Austin Carroll (56), Jake Knox (35), and Nolen Turner (54). (Photo by Ron Barry)



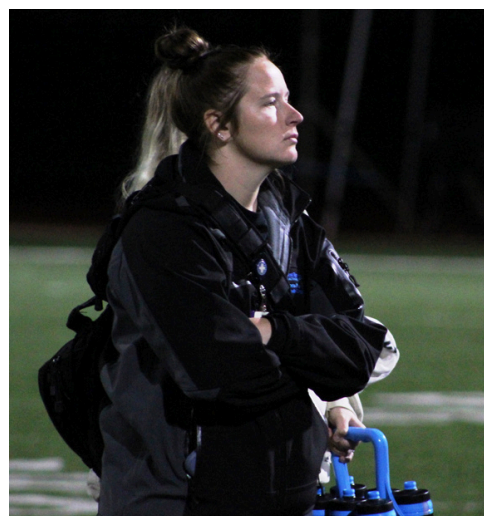


Above: For Crockett's DK Woods (32), rushing yards were hard to find, as on this play where his helmet was ripped off by Kirby's Kobe Gardner (23). Woods was held to 37 yards on 15 carries, but managed a fourth-quarter touchdown. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Dre Walker made this outstanding fingertip grab of a third-quarter pass from Ben Burgess and took it in for an apparent touchdown, but the play was negated -- properly -- on an offensive pass interference penalty against Walker, who used a push to get some separation from his defender. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Demo Pickens (3) returned a punt 26 yards after getting by this near face-mask violation, setting up the 30-yard field goal by Avery Hurst in the third quarter. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Finally getting a fairly quiet night on the sidelines, Crockett athletic trainer extraordinaire Carah-Beth Beck didn't have any serious issues from Cavalier players during the contest at Kirby. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: The Cavs had an early break in the second quarter when Austin Carroll (56) and Nolen Turner (54) hit Kirby quarterback Brandon Black (2) as he threw, taking some steam off his pass and sending it in the direction of Amaron Hobson (4, in the left foreground). (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Amarion Hobson was able to make a diving interception after the hit by Carroll and Turner as Randle Perry (50) was beside Hobson in pass coverage. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett linebacker Austin Carroll (56) flips the football toward an unseen back judge after recovering a first-period fumble for the Cavaliers, but the offense couldn't capitalize. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Demo Pickens (3) caught this short pass, picked up an escort from fellow receiver Karsen Burgess (2), and advanced the ball 37 yards to the Kirby one to set up Crockett's clinching touchdown in the fourth quarter. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: On Deuce Greenhill's decisive 65-yard pass reception touchdown, he had to turn on the jets to speed away from the final two Cougar defenders. It was Greenhill's ninth touchdown of the season. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: One of the few times a Cav tackler got a good grip on Kirby's Tre Copeland was on this play, made by Amarion Hobson. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: On another play, it was Dre Walker (6) and Squirt Pickens (23) who sandwiched the Cougars' Tre Copeland in order to get him down quickly. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: ... Woods received the celebratory lift from lineman Carson Bridger (79). The 17-6 win moves Crockett into Round 2 of the TSSAA playoffs against Dyer County. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: When DK Woods (32) took the snap out of the Wildcat formation and followed Amarion Hobson's block into the end zone for Crockett's clinching touchdown in the fourth quarter ... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Deuce Greenhill wrapped up the triumph by stepping in front of Kirby's Tavarious Burns (to intercept this pass with only three minutes left in the game. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Now the Cavaliers must contend again with Dyer County's massive running back Ja'bari Livingston, who thundered for 206 yards in 23 carries the first time the teams met this season. (Photo by Ron Barry)