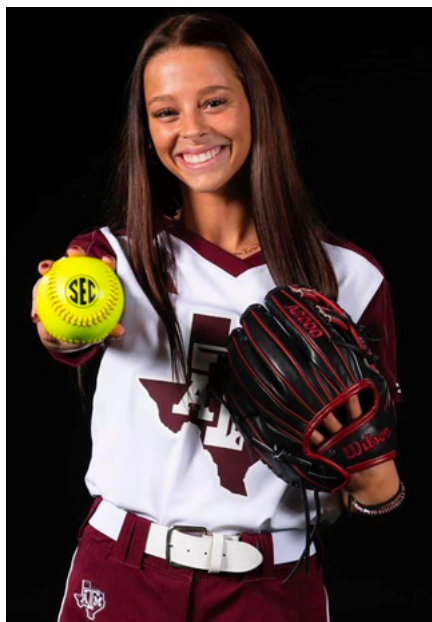


# PIPER WHITE BECOMES FIRST CCHS ATHLETE TO SIGN A POWER FOUR CONFERENCE GRANT-IN-AID



**Above:** Brody Haley netted eight of his game-high 12 points in the third quarter to spark the Cavs past Gibson County Monday night. (Photo by Ashley Owens)

## By Ron Barry

Crockett County senior shortstop Piper White has been playing softball since she was five years old.

At 12, she knew she wanted to play the sport at the Division I level when she hit college.

On Monday, the dream that became a goal finally became a reality when the speedster signed a grant-in-aid with Texas A&M, the first CCHS athlete in any sport to ever gain an athletic scholarship to a Power Four conference school. That it's a Southeastern Conference university makes it even sweeter for her local supporters.

White, who is also an All-District volleyball player for the Lady Cavaliers, signed her grant before a roomful of family, friends, teammates, and coaches who have all played a role in her journey to College Station.

Several of her past and present coaches addressed the gathering in the CCHS Little Theater, which was festively decorated in Texas A&M colors with balloons, pennants, uniforms, signs, and even cookies.

White's first coach was Ben Canovan, who now oversees recreation facilities for the city of Huntingdon. He told the crowd that it was obvious early on that White was going to be special.

"She wasn't just there for the fun of it, or to have something to do," he said. "She had a fire that was just different from the others. She would have been the best player on the field at any position I would have put her."

When she got into the Crockett system, current athletic director Duke Kail became her coach, and he echoed much of what Canovan introduced.

"We had practices where you had to make a diving catch before you could stop," Kail said. "Almost everybody dreaded it. Except Piper - she loved it! She kept saying, 'Hit me more - hit me more!' If we'd lose a game, most of the girls would be disappointed. But Piper would be mad. That's just one more way I'd know she'd excel."

Away from the podium, Kail spoke confidently about why he thinks White can play at the next level.

"As fast as she is, if she hits a grounder to the left side - unless it's like a one-hop bullet or something - she's going to be safe at first," he said. "And then she's a genuine threat to steal second and third. But she can also burn an outfielder down the line or in a gap if they give her too much space."

As a junior in the 2023 season, White led the Lady Cavaliers in at-bats (103), runs scored (50), stolen bases (31), and triples (3) on her way to All-District honors. She hit .417 overall, tied with Kinleigh Lamb for second-best on the Crockett squad. She and Lamb were also tied for second in hits with 43.

The only player with a stronger offensive stat line was senior catcher Lynden Cole - now playing at Pensacola State in Florida in hopes of joining White at the SEC level in the future.

White, who has some family that live about an hour away from College Station, said she first went to a camp at Texas A&M in 2022.

"I was really impressed with the facilities there," she said, "and the coaching staff has been great. Our direct contact has been limited by NCAA rules, but they've been sending cards to stay in touch. Now that I've been to some sport events there, I love it. I'm excited for this opportunity."

White's respect from, and rapport with, her teammates was evident at Monday's gathering. Not only were the entire Crockett softball and volleyball teams there, but Lady Cav graduates Lamb, Brooklyn Haynes, and Makenna Tibbs also showed up to show their support.



**Above:** When Piper White does this -- smacking a grounder down the third-base line -- you're not going to get her out at first. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** Piper White hangs in to turn a tough double play against South Gibson. (Photo by Ron Barry)







**Left:** Piper White, surrounded by her immediately family, signs her athletic grant-in-aid to Texas A&M. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** Piper White poses with her former and current coaches in the sports of softball and volleyball. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Below:** Piper White can also pull the ball to right field with some pop when necessary. (Photo by Ron Barry)



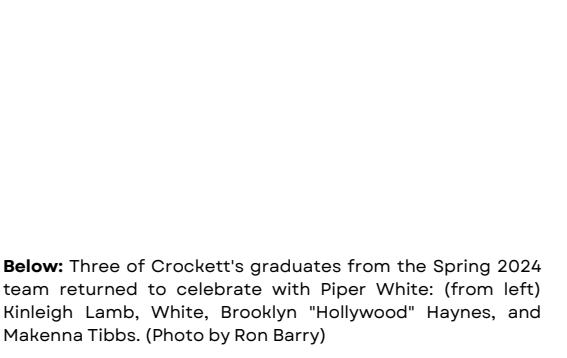
**Above:** Even on a muddy field, Piper White can steal you a base. She had 31 last year and was caught only twice. (Photo by Ron Barry)





**Left:** Piper White with her softball teammates. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** Piper White with her volleyball teammates. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Below:** Three of Crockett's graduates from the Spring 2024 team returned to celebrate with Piper White: (from left) Kinleigh Lamb, White, Brooklyn "Hollywood" Haynes, and Makenna Tibbs. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Right:** Once again -- the speed. Piper White is going to beat this throw easily. (Photo by Ron Barry)