

"HEADY" PLAY GIVES CROCKETT A DOUBLEHEADER HOOPS SWEEP AT LEXINGTON



Above: In the end, Karson Kail's contribution can't be overlooked. He never took a shot, but his presence settled the offense and helped slow the Lexington transition game defensively. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Rudyard Kipling's famous poem "If" is best known for its opening phrase: "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs..."

But right before that epic composition ends, there are these lines: "If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run, yours is the Earth and everything that's in it." Except for the fact that the subtitle for "If" is "A Father's Advice to His Son," Kipling has basically described Crockett County's Lady Cavalier basketball player Jordyn Maddox.

The effort Maddox puts forth each game easily fulfills the lines near the end of the poem. More importantly to Coach Kayla Irvin, it's when she models the opening line that Crockett's fortunes tend to significantly improve.

Such was the case Tuesday night in Lexington when – in another game full of full-court pressure, a hostile environment (not to mention dimly-lit, which usually causes trouble to normally good shooters), and talented opposition – Maddox's "headiness" was a major factor as the Lady Cavs outlasted the host Lady Tigers 53-44 for their ninth victory in 10 starts this season.

For good measure, a second dose of "headiness" – we'll get to that in a little while – helped Coach Rick Rudesill's Crockett boys upset Lexington 44-35, exacting revenge for a 10-point loss earlier this season in Alamo.

But let's start with the girls. Maddox plays with an intense serenity: a calm in the midst of a storm, rarely rattled, pretty much the same expression on her face no matter the circumstance. But she has an "awareness," an ability to see things on the court that many others don't, a sense of where to go to best get open when she doesn't have the ball and a sense of the best thing to do with it when she does – all planted smack-dab in an extraordinarily large pile of humility. Oh – and she's just a sophomore.

The best part of all this – for Irvin – is that when Maddox gets it clicking, it often lifts the other members of the team to do similar things, as it did in Lexington. Irvin loves to watch how it works.

"I think when you play so hard and compete all the time, you give yourself the opportunity to rest in your gift and rise," Irvin said. "She always gives all she has, and she was a calm in the storm for us tonight no doubt. Our team looks to her for that, and I thought they did a great job of getting her the ball in good space and making the extra pass.

"[For instance], Karlee (Castellaw) made an excellent extra one to her in transition, and Mari (Amaria Walker) fed her inside out where she could catch toes to the rim. The very next play, she found Karlee in transition on a skip. When you have kids like these who don't care who gets the credit, it sure makes it fun. We are getting better, but more than anything, we are getting so many good things from different kids at different spots on different nights. I love them!"

On this particular night, what they were getting were Maddox and Castellaw using constant movement to find open spots to shoot unguarded from distance. Maddox netted a career-high 22 points and seemed to score every time Lexington threatened to make a run at the lead. Included in the point total were four threes.

But she had great company in the senior Castellaw, who drilled five three-pointers in the contest. Her first two got the Lady Cavs off to a good start in the opening quarter, helping build a 12-7 lead. Her middle one gave Crockett its first double-digit margin at 30-18 with 6:37 remaining in the third period. And her last two hammered the nails into the Lady Tigers' coffin in the fourth, providing double-digit leads again every time Lexington staged a rally.

Among all those highlights were contributions of solid rebounding and defense from Halle Holyfield and Walker, and key baskets from Torey Savage and Keeton Holyfield. Everything was needed to offset a gutsy performance by Lady Tiger Holly Bartholomew, who tossed in 24 points, some on driving layups from a variety of awkward angles and positions – but they kept going in, and she single-handedly kept Lexington competitive.

In the boys game that followed, the halftime score was 13-13. Suffice it to say that both coaching staffs were trying virtually everything in their arsenal to gain a foothold.

For Rudesill, it was a steady stream of lineup adjustments, but despite occasional good individual plays, his "team" was chaotic, too much in a hurry and often turning the ball over. Lexington was playing much the same way.

Early in the third quarter, Rudesill inserted seldom-used (up to this point in the season) sophomore guard Karson Kail, who displays much of the "headiness" Maddox possesses on the girls squad. And while he didn't exactly stuff the stat sheet during the very solid minutes he played, Crockett looked much more poised and started to click. Preston Lambert and Kevin Pledge began to score, taking some of the load off of Cade Freeman.

DK Woods and Andre Garduno were hitting the boards. Lambert's three baskets in the third period – the last one a twisting putback that just beat the buzzer – had staked the Cavs to a 25-22 lead heading into the final frame. Kail was the glue holding it all together.

Suddenly Pledge tallied the first five points of the fourth quarter and the Cavs had a little bit of breathing room. Following a Woods bucket and then the final field goal by Pledge, at the 2:17 mark, Crockett turned it back over to Freeman, who proceeded to drain eight straight free throws down the stretch to improve the Cavs' season record to 3-7.

Freeman finished with a game-high 18 points, with Pledge adding 11 and Lambert eight. Andrew Pearson led Lexington with 11, all in the second half. Both Crockett teams will entertain Chester County in Alamo Friday night in a 6:00 doubleheader.

GIRLS GAME #10 – DEC 17

Crockett (53) – Jordan Maddox 22, Karlee Castellaw 15, Amaria Walker 6, Torey Savage 4, Gabby Bursey 2, Halle Holyfield 2, Keeton Holyfield 2, Ellie Henderson 0, Kira Bray 0, TEAM 19 FG, 6-6 FT. 3-Pointers: Castellaw 5, Maddox 4. Record: 9-1.

Lexington (44) – Holly Bartholomew 24, Cara Roach 10, Kadence McKnight 5, Lexy Cooper 3, Millie Davis 2, Jada Transor 0, TEAM 16 FG, 8-19 FT. 3-Pointers: Roach 2, Bartholomew 1, Cooper 1. Record: 8-3.

BOYS GAME #10 – DEC 17

Crockett (44) – Cade Freeman 18, Kevin Pledge 11, Preston Lambert 8, Reed Leforgee 2, Andre Garduno 2, DK Woods 2, Squirt Pickens 1, Jayden Frye 0, Grayson Lambert 0, Cortland Reddick 0, Karson Kail 0, TEAM 16 FG, 12-15 FT. 3-Pointers – None. Record: 3-7.

Lexington (35) – Andrew Pearson 11, Marquan Talley 8, Jakob Davis 5, Grant Patterson 5, Elye Pearson 4, Cameron Gordon 2, Daniel Villatoro 0, TEAM 11 FG, 9-13 FT. 3-Pointers – A Pearson 2, Patterson 1, E Pearson 1. Record: 6-4.



Above: A few of the kickout passes from Lady Cavaliers came to a red-hot Karlee Castellaw, who drained five three-pointers, including this one over the outstretched arm of Lexington's Holly Bartholomew. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The wall may read "The Home of the Tigers," but a certain Lady Cavalier made it look like it was HER house. Jordyn Maddox, preparing to kick a pass out to an open teammate, scored 22 points for Crockett. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Halle Holyfield drives hard to the basket against the defense of Lexington's Cara Roach (14). Holyfield's basket with 4:44 remaining gave Crockett a 12-point lead at the time. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Amaria Walker heads back up the floor after scoring the first basket of the second half. Walker had six points and limited much of Lexington's inside presence. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Torey Savage whips a pass out to the left wing against Lexington Thursday night. Savage scored four big points and supplied key minutes for Crockett when Amaria Walker got in foul trouble. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: As Lexington's Holly Bartholomew (foreground) readies to shoot a free throw, Crockett's Karlee Castellaw is set to fight for rebounding position if a miss occurs. Bartholomew netted 24 points for the hosts, but Castellaw's five three-pointers kept the Lady Cavs out front throughout the night. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Keeton Holyfield (15) runs a weave with Karlee Castellaw (foreground) and Ellie Henderson (in the back corner) during the second half of Crockett's win over the Lady Tigers. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Jordyn Maddox looks one way with her eyes as she prepares to launch a pass in the exact opposite direction during Tuesday night's win at Lexington. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Ellie Henderson fires a bounce pass into the post as Crockett tries to get the ball inside against the Lady Tigers Tuesday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Crockett's Callie Freeman (bottom left corner) knows this three-pointer is good just barely after it left the red-hot hand of Jordyn Maddox Tuesday night. Ellie Henderson (30) and Keeton Holyfield turn to chase a rebound that won't be occurring. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Crockett's leading scorer Cade Freeman sizes up Lexington defender Grant Patterson before heading to the hoop to net two of his game-high 18 points Tuesday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Reed Leforgee scored the first bucket of the second quarter, giving Crockett a 10-8 advantage. The Cavs only trailed twice after that - each time by a single point. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: DK Woods tries to ignore the fact that his arm is firmly gripped by his defender as he works his way toward the basket in Tuesday night's victory at Lexington. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Preston Lambert (3), who netted eight points for the Cavaliers, gets set to fire a crosscourt pass to an open teammate as Kevin Pledge looks on from the baseline area. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Crockett's Andre Garduno defies the "Big Red Tiger" staring him down from the wall and lays in this power basket for two points in Tuesday night's duel with Lexington. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Squirt Pickens (2) waits for Kevin Pledge (foreground) to break open before attempting to lob him the ball inside. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: When sophomore Karson Kail (22) checked in for the Cavs Tuesday night, the lineup began to click. Here he dribbles left to set up an inside pass to Preston Lambert (3). (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: The game's last two minutes featured a lot of this: Lexington fouling Cade Freeman repeatedly to try to get the ball back. Freeman foiled their plans, draining eight straight free throws to ice the triumph. (Photo by Ron Barry)

