

# GARDUNO, LAMBERT LIFT CROCKETT PAST PIONEERS; LADY CAV MISCUES LEAD TO OVERTIME LOSS



**Above:** This is the play that sent Crockett's Preston Lambert (left) to the foul line with 3.7 seconds left after being fouled by Gibson County's Ryan Goad (34). Lambert made both shots for the decisive points in the Cavaliers' 45-43 victory. (Photo by Ron Barry)

## By Ron Barry

If you thought Crockett County's basketball Cavaliers would win a game this season when leading scorer Cade Freeman was held without a field goal, raise your hand.

That's what I thought: I don't see any hands (mine included). Nor do I see anyone who was correct (myself included).

Because Friday night in Alamo, Coach Rick Rudesill's scrappy Cavs pulled off a comeback from an eight-point, fourth-quarter deficit without the usually dependable Freeman marching in front of the scoring parade, and stunned visiting Gibson County 45-43 as surprising heroes Andre Garduno and Preston Lambert took their turns in the spotlight.

Garduno netted a season-high 12 points and kept Crockett in the ballgame for three quarters until Lambert could make a series of big plays – and free throws – down the stretch to help the Cavs improve their record to 6-9. The win was their second two-point triumph in a row.

It followed a disappointing opener for the Crockett faithful, as in the twin bill's first game, the Lady Cavaliers blew a nine-point, third-period advantage and fell to the Lady Pioneers 49-46 in overtime. Gibson County has now provided both Crockett blemishes on an otherwise sparkling 13-2 record.

The boys contest started slowly for the Cavaliers and caused the crowd to thin considerably by halftime, when the Pioneers held a 29-18 margin despite Garduno's eight points. But Crockett won the third quarter 10-7 to get within 36-28, and when the fourth frame began, the Cavs' Lambert twins took over for a while.

Brothers Preston and Grayson scored the first six tallies of the final period, cutting the gap to 36-34. After Gibson County answered with the next two buckets, Garduno brought the hosts to within 40-37 at the 2:16 mark. The teams traded single free throws, and then the Pioneers' DeMarian Wright swished a pair to give the visitors a commanding 43-38 edge with only 1:01 to play.

Little did anyone know the now 8-8 Pioneers would not score again.

With 39.6 seconds remaining, an offensive rebound was tapped out in the direction of Crockett point guard Squirt Pickens, who instantly drained a three-pointer to make it 43-41. Less than 10 seconds later, Preston Lambert was fouled while wrestling for a rebound after the seventh straight miss from the charity stripe by Gibson County's top scorer Kylan Finch.

Lambert, who had earlier in the quarter missed his only previous free throws, drained both of them this time, and suddenly the contest was tied at 43-all with 30.7 seconds showing on the scoreboard clock.

The Pioneers declined to play for a final shot and went for a drive to the hoop at their first opportunity – only to have the savvy Lambert set up directly in the path of the driver to a draw a charging call on the shooter. With 21.7 seconds now remaining, the ball would belong to Crockett.

Clamping down on the perimeter, the Pioneer defense wasn't allowing a good shot to the Cavs, and Lambert decided to take the ball hard to the basket from the right corner and was hammered on his left arm and elbow by Gibson County's Ryan Goad with only 3.7 ticks to go. Lambert calmly stepped to the line, took a couple of deep breaths, and then knocked down both shots for a 45-43 Crockett advantage.

After a timeout, on the ensuing play, Freeman guarded the inbounder to prevent a long pass and force the Pioneers to race the clock. When they got it in to Trajan Eddings, the Cavs' DK Woods forced him to take the pass on a dead run toward the sideline, and when he turned too quickly to make his cut back upcourt, his feet flew out from under him and he fell chest-down on the floor for a traveling violation.

Rudesill was happy to get the win, but is still waiting for his club to put together a solid four-quarter effort.

"We just haven't shot the ball well this season," he said. "If we had, our record would be well above .500. The overall effort has been there; we just need to start making more shots. It's as simple as that."

Lambert's nine-point performance and seven counters from Zay Jones supported Garduno's offense. Jayden Frye added six points on a pair of treys.

In the girls encounter – a rematch with the only team to hand the Lady Cavs a defeat this season – Gibson County did it again in virtually the same manner, overcoming a fourth-quarter deficit by ramping up its defensive pressure on Crockett's ballhandlers and riding (no pun intended) the coattails of point guard Akira Riding, who scored 14 of her game-high 17 in the second half and overtime for the winners.

Coach Kayla Irvin's girls had recovered from an early Gibson lead and finally moved on top when Karlee Castellaw drilled a three-point shot with 1:12 left before the half to make it 25-22. Jordyn Maddox added a bucket right before the buzzer for a 27-22 edge at the intermission.

The margin grew as big as nine in the third until a late rally cut the gap to 35-34 entering the final period. Except for a breakaway basket on a steal by Gabby Bursey, post player Amaria Walker was the only Lady Cav able to generate offense in the fourth quarter as the Lady Pioneers began forcing turnovers at will.

As in the first meeting, neither team shot the ball well throughout the game. And the final 1:43 of regulation was scoreless.

In the overtime, Gibson's Sania Reaves pushed the visitors out front 45-43 with a driving layup at the 3:01 mark. Bursey made a free throw about a minute later, and then Walker regained the lead for Crockett with a spinning bucket from the lane. Reaves answered with a pair of charity shots with 29.1 seconds to go, and Riding added a pair after the Lady Cavs missed on their next possession.

Now the Gibson lead was three (49-46) with Crockett inbound at the far baseline. A long pass from Walker got it near the Lady Cav bench for another timeout with 2.2 seconds left.

The Lady Pioneers were not about to let the ball get near Maddox or Castellaw, nor were they going to foul. The ball found its way to Bursey, who was closed on immediately by Riding and couldn't find an opening for the necessary three-pointer.

Maddox led Crockett's scoring with 15. Walker contributed 10, Bursey nine, Castellaw six, and Halle Holyfield four. Riding's 17 were tops for Gibson, which never substituted in the entire contest. All five starters played the entire 36 minutes for the Lady Pioneers, who are now 14-4.

Both Crockett teams travel to Selmer Tuesday night for a 6:00 doubleheader with McNairy Central.

#### **GIRLS GAME #15 – JAN 3 (Overtime)**

**Crockett (46)** – Jordyn Maddox 15, Amaria Walker 10, Gabby Bursey 9, Karlee Castellaw 6, Halle Holyfield 4, Keeton Holyfield 2, Torey Savage 0, Wesley Thornton 0, TEAM 18 FG, 5-6 FT. 3-Pointers: Castellaw 2, Bursey 2, Maddox 1. Record: 13-2.

**Gibson County (49)** – Akira Riding 17, Emily Skinner 10, Sania Reaves 9, Georgia Lannom 7, Kailey Davidson 6, TEAM 16 FG, 11-13 FT. 3-Pointers: Davidson 2, Riding 2, Lannom 1, Skinner 1. Record: 14-4.

#### **BOYS GAME #15 – JAN 3**

**Crockett (45)** – Andre Garduno 12, Preston Lambert 9, Zay Jones 7, Jayden Frye 6, Squirt Pickens 5, Grayson Lambert 4, Cade Freeman 2, DK Woods 0, Reed Leforgee 0, TEAM 16 FG, 9-17 FT. 3-Pointers – Frye 2, P Lambert 1, Pickens 1. Record: 6-9.

**Gibson County (43)** – Kylan Finch 17, DeMarian Wright 7, Dillon Reynolds 6, Coree Wells 4, Trajan Eddings 3, Ryan Goad 3, Isaiah Deberry 2, Skylar Robertson 1, TEAM 15 FG, 9-18 FT. 3-Pointers – Finch 2, Eddings 1, Goad 1. Record: 8-8.



**Above:** Crockett point guard Squirt Pickens directs traffic to set up the offense late in the fourth quarter Friday night against Gibson County. Pickens hit a big three-pointer with 39.6 seconds remaining. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Above:** Before the comeback ending, it was the play of Andre Garduno (24) -- with shots like this one -- that kept the Cavs within striking distance. Garduno led Crockett with 12 points. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Above:** The Cavalier fourth-quarter comeback kept Crockett cheerleaders Emmie Pickens (left) and Sophia McGowan smiling during all the timeouts. (Photo by Ron Barry)





**Above:** Grayson Lambert (left) and Jayden Frye (23) chase down Gibson County's Dillon Reynolds (14), foiling this fast-break opportunity for the Pioneers. Lambert scored four straight points early in the fourth to help ignite the Cav comeback. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** Andre Garduno (24) drives to the basket around Gibson County's Coree Wells (1) in the third period of Friday night's victory. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Left:** The Cavs' DK Woods drives on Gibson County's Kylan Finch (2) as Reed Leforgee shifts his offensive set in the background. Woods later helped foil Gibson's last-second shot attempt defensively. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Right:** Preston Lambert prepares to break the tie on this free throw with only 3.7 seconds remaining in the contest. Lambert netted nine points for the 6-9 Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Below:** Preston Lambert hits the deck to make sure Crockett gets possession of this loose ball before the Pioneers' Isaiah Deberry can reach it. Andre Garduno (left) helped knock it loose, while Cade Freeman (13) circles near the baseline. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Above:** The tension of Friday night's nail-biter may be wearing on Crockett volleyball player Darcy Puffer (left), while teammate Katherine West is invested in some calming popcorn. (Photo by Ron Barry)





**Above:** Crockett cheerleader Leah Beaird waves to the crowd at the conclusion of the Cavs' final timeout Friday night, which set up the defensive strategy for Gibson County's last opportunity... (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** In the girls game, Crockett's Amaria Walker scored on this play with 52.5 seconds remaining in overtime to provide the Lady Cavs' last lead, but Gibson County rallied for the win. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Below:** ... which ended like this, when the Pioneers' Trajan Eddings tried to turn upcourt too fast from a dead run and had his feet fly out from under him for a traveling violation, securing Crockett's triumph. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Above:** Whenever these two teams duel, there are always a lot of plays like this one, in which Crockett's Jordyn Maddox and Gabby Bursey are battling for a loose ball with Gibson's Sania Reaves (4), who pushes it out to Akira Riding (2). (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** And Karlee Castellaw won this wrestling match with Akira Riding, once again gaining control of a loose ball. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Above:** Karlee Castellaw (with the ball) was also in on some floorburn skirmishes, wrestling this loose ball away from Kailey Davidson and Georgia Lannom. (Photo by Ron Barry)







**Above:** In her first bout with Emily Skinner, Karlee Castellaw found a way to stay on her feet to eventually grab this one. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** Halle Holyfield looks to get around the Lady Cavaliers' Kailey Davidson (35) during Friday night's overtime period. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Below:** And in her next bout with Emily Skinner -- who was getting more uniform than ball in this scramble -- Karlee Castellaw was not about to take any chances... (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Below:** ... and displayed the form that has retained the title of Court Wrestling Queen over all challengers thus far this season. When Karlee Castellaw yanks on that ball, bodies tend to go flying. (Photo by Ron Barry)



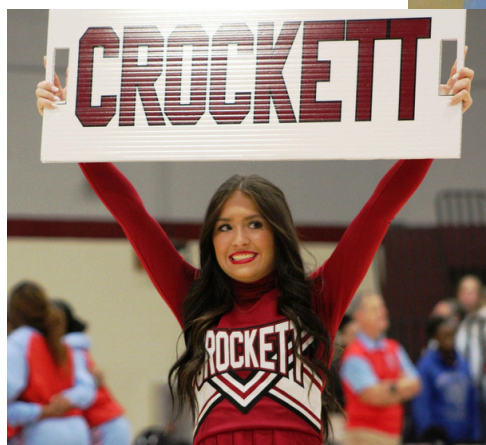
**Left:** Keeton Holyfield tries to maintain control of her dribble despite pressure from Gibson County's Kailey Davidson. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Right:** Crockett's Jordyn Maddox was hounded by Gibson's Sania Reeves (4) throughout the game, but still scored 15 points. Here she plays some defense against Reeves. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Above:** Gabby Bursey (4) and Akira Riding (2) had a fierce battle throughout the contest. Riding's strong second half, in which she scored 14 of her 17 points, was decisive for Gibson County. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Left:** Cacile Jo McNeill and the rest of the cheer team will get their next opportunity to yell for a Cavalier sweep Tuesday night at McNairy Central in Selmer. (Photo by Ron Barry)