

FRIGID NIGHT OUTSIDE MATCHED BY BASKETBALLERS' PLAY IN DOUBLE LOSS TO MCNAIRY



Above: Crockett's Karlee Castellaw distributes a pass out to a teammate in the left corner as Amaria Walker (25) circles around behind her to be an option for the next one. Castellaw scored a game-high 21 points for the Lady Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Here's a quick quiz to name a common theme for the Crockett County basketball teams on their trip over to McNairy Central Tuesday night:

- (A) Dig a first-half hole too deep to get out of.
- (B) Have lethargic stretches that bring your coaches to their wits' end.
- (C) Miss most of your free throws.
- (D) All of the above.

If you chose "D," you've pretty much summarized this cold winter night in Selmer, Tennessee.

Crockett's girls dug themselves a 29-16 first-half hole when only two starters scored points, rallied in the third quarter to make a game of it, and then killed each chance to pull even closer in the fourth by missing free throws or turning the ball over as they dropped a 56-48 decision to McNairy.

In the night's second game, Crockett dug a 10-0 hole to begin the contest, didn't receive a single point from a starter in the first half, and shot 25% from the foul line in falling to the host Bobcats 46-30. If Coach Rick Rudesill's second unit hadn't made a game of it by the intermission – trimming McNairy's lead to 18-16 – the final outcome would have been even more brutal.

McNairy's girls, eager to get a birthday celebration win for Coach Jerry Lott, jumped on the Lady Cavaliers quickly by utilizing a "snowbirding" transition game – sending a player long every time a Crockett player shot – which brought them several easy layups as the visitors were slow to adapt. Lott also assigned his tallest starter, post player Brooklyn Hopkins, to guard Lady Cav leading scorer Jordyn Maddox, and Hopkins' long wingspan made it nearly impossible for Maddox to get an uncontested shot early on.

As a result, it was soon 14-4, McNairy. A Karlee Castellaw three-pointer at the 2:03 mark and a putback basket by Maddox with 35 seconds left allowed Crockett to close the margin to 16-9 by the end of the quarter.

But the Lady Bobcats then rattled off nine more straight points as Coach Kayla Irvin's team went another six minutes without netting a point. Finally, Castellaw nailed another three-pointer and Maddox scored again to cut it to 25-16, but McNairy added the final four tallies of the half for a 13-point edge at the break.

Irvin, visibly upset with her team's inconsistent defense in the opening frames, got her troops to ratchet up the effort in the third period, resulting in a 14-6 Crockett run. Castellaw, who had a game-high and season-high 21 points for the Lady Cavs, scored five in the final 29.8 seconds as the visitors closed the gap to 33-30 heading into the final stanza.

But in the fourth quarter, after McNairy's Jocelyn Barnes highlighted an eight-point run with a long three until Castellaw matched it at the 6:21 mark, Crockett began a frustrating stretch of ballhandling turnovers and missed free throws that prevented too serious a comeback. Still, yet another Castellaw triple – she had six in the contest – brought the Lady Cavs within 49-44 with 1:07 remaining.

At that point, Lott instructed his squad to keep the ball in the hands of Bailee Shelton. Forced to foul her at that point, Crockett sent her to the line multiple times, and the talented junior swished all nine of her fourth-period attempts.

McNairy's success from the foul stripe – netting 15 of 18 – turned out to be the mathematical difference in the game, as Crockett missed 11 of its 18 attempts.

Maddox scored 12 points to support Castellaw's 21. Those two were the only Lady Cav starters with first-half points; reserve Ellie Henderson tallied the other two. Amaria Walker scored all nine of her points in the second half as Crockett's season record dipped to 13-3. McNairy, led by Shelton's 20-point effort and 17 from Neerajah Wade, improved to 12-4.

Even more frustrating for Crockett fans was the beginning of the boys game. Rudesill yanked his entire starting lineup off the floor after they fell behind 8-0 and inserted DK Woods, Jayden Frye, Grayson Lambert, Reed Leforgee, and Kevin Pledge to replace them. Sparked especially by Woods' constant hustle, the second unit had closed the margin to 12-11 by the 5:38 mark of the second period on a Lambert bucket.

When Frye drilled a three-pointer with 1.4 seconds left, the McNairy lead was only 18-16 at the intermission.

But Crockett could produce a mere 14 points worth of offense in the entire second half, while the hosts doubled it to pull away for the win. No Cavalier player scored more than six points in the game, the total produced by Woods and Frye. Cade Freeman had five and Lambert four as Crockett fell to 6-10 for the year.

Jackson Price produced 12 points and Josh Sain 10 to pace the now 9-6 Bobcats.

Both Crockett teams are scheduled to host Henry County Saturday in a 2:00 p.m. doubleheader that may be in jeopardy due to forecasts of significant snow Friday.

GIRLS GAME #16 - JANUARY 7

Crockett (48) - Karlee Castellaw 21, Jordyn Maddox 12, Amaria Walker 9, Gabby Burse 2, Keeton Holyfield 2, Ellie Henderson 2, Halle Holyfield 0, Torey Savage 0, Wesley Thornton 0, TEAM 17 FG, 7-18 FT. 3-Pointers: Castellaw 6, Maddox 1. Record: 13-3.

McNairy Central (56) - Bailee Shelton 20, Neerajah Wade 17, Anna Clayton 8, Jocelyn Barnes 6, Brooklyn Hopkins 5, Linlee Davidson 0, Carlee Shelton 0, TEAM 19 FG, 15-18 FT. 3-Pointers: B Shelton 1, Wade 1, Barnes 1. Record: 12-4.

BOYS GAME #16 - JANUARY 7

Crockett (30) - DK Woods 6, Jayden Frye 6, Cade Freeman 5, Grayson Lambert 4, Zay Jones 3, Andre Garduno 2, Preston Lambert 2, Reed Leforgee 2, Squirt Pickens 0, Kevin Pledge 0, Cortland Reddick 0, Nolen Turner 0, Karson Kail 0, Carson Webb 0, Carter Wren 0, TEAM 12 FG, 2-8 FT. 3-Pointers - Frye 2, Freeman 1, Jones 1. Record: 6-10.

McNairy Central (46) - Jackson Price 12, Josh Sain 10, Konner Shelton 8, Ryder Plunk 7, Case Stone 4, Tyler Mangrum 3, Kylan Allen 2, Luke King 0, Jackson Allen 0, Jasper Hickman 0, Jackson King 0, Wyatt Manley 0, TEAM 18 FG, 6-7 FT. 3-Pointers - Shelton 2, Plunk 1, Mangrum 1. Record: 9-6.

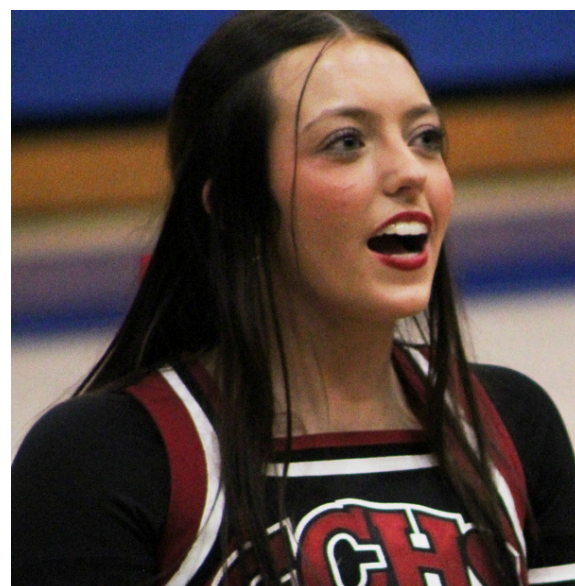


Left: Jordyn Maddox rarely had an uncontested shot against McNairy Central's defense, which placed a heavy focus on her whereabouts. She did manage to get open for this three-pointer on her way to 12 points. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Halle Holyfield tries to drive around Lady Bobcat Bailee Shelton, who led McNairy's scoring with 20 points. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Karlee Castellaw drilled six three-pointers in this game, and by the time she let the last one fly, a couple of her teammates' hands (in the foreground) were already signaling "good!" (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Crockett cheerleader Kaylei Porter tried her best to keep Cavalier fans involved in hollering for their players. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Amaria Walker, who scored all nine of her points in the second half, drives to the hoop between McNairy defenders Bailee Shelton (15) and Brooklyn Hopkins. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: The bruising on the left arm and elbow of Jordyn Maddox shows that basketball can definitely be a high-contact sport. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Just before the pre-game introductions, Crockett's Kinlee Walker (left), Chloe Adkisson, and Nyah Cathey were ready for their teammates to join them at the end of the line. (Photo by Ron Barry)

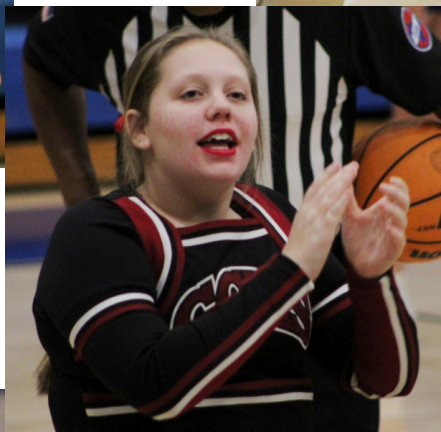


Left: By the fourth quarter, the game's leading scorers -- McNairy's Bailee Shelton and Crockett's Karlée Castellaw -- were facing off as both teams tried to nail down the win. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Eva Bursleson tried to keep the spirits high during Crockett's final timeout in the fourth quarter. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Senior Zoey Bursleson -- sister to the previously pictured Eva -- gets the crowd engaged during a Crockett County timeout. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Jordyn Maddox slipped inside for this bucket as teammates Keeton Holyfield and Torey Savage jockeyed for potential rebounding position. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: The non-stop hustle of DK Woods (32) gave Crockett's boys a big boost when he was inserted midway through the opening quarter. Here he disrupts a shot by McNairy's Jackson Price as Cav teammate Kevin Pledge closes from the other side. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Jayden Frye looks for an opening against a McNairy double-team. Frye hit a pair of three-pointers to join DK Woods as Crockett's top scorers with six points. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Reed Leforgee deflects this pass from McNairy's Case Stone (23) in second-quarter action Tuesday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Crockett's Andre Garduno is in pursuit -- among a sea of McNairy competitors -- as a long rebound kicks well out to the top of the key area in Tuesday night's game. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Grayson Lambert sneaks inside for a basket against Bobcat defender Jackson Price to narrow McNairy's lead to 12-11 in the second period. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett cheerleader Mia Grace Simmons is a study in intensity as she watches a battle on the floor for a loose ball. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Andre Garduno drops a short jump hook over the defense of McNairy's Jackson Price. (Photo by Ron Barry)

