

CCMS GIRLS WIN CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE JAMES C. HAILE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

By Ron Barry

Just four years ago, the Crockett County Middle School girls basketball team won only a single game in its entire season.

Then the current group of eighth-graders stepped onto the floor as sixth-graders, entering the program for the first time. Saturday night they stepped off the floor for the final time as middle schoolers, having constructed a 20-4 record and claiming the championship of the James C. Haile Basketball Tournament in Murfreesboro.

Coach Jamar Turner's club defeated Watertown 38-29 in the title game behind a 20-point performance from Jentry Maddox and a 14-point effort from Addie Whitby, 10 of which came in the decisive final quarter as the Lady Cavaliers were protecting a 25-19 lead entering the frame.

CCMS began this season with a 2-3 mark "when everyone was trying to figure it out," according to assistant coach JulieAnn Maddox. Then came 18 victories in the next 19 games, falling only in the NWMSAA championship game by a single point.

Turner and his assistants – Maddox, Mary Kate Gourley, and Emily White – watched the squad grow into one in which each player found her role and dedicated herself to performing that role.

"Four years ago I was coaching against my assistant coaches and most of the girls on this team," Turner said after Saturday's Haile championship. Fast forward and we are holding up a gold ball. Every girl on this team showed up every day ready to practice hard and give all she had. Some got to play more than others but they never complained and they never quit. As coaches we tried to instill in them that those on the bench are just as important as the girls on the court."

Right: These girls and coaches captured the championship of the James C. Haile Basketball Tournament in Murfreesboro Saturday.

In the championship game, Crockett held Watertown – which had scored 50 points in its tournament semifinal game – to a seven-point first half, grabbing a 15-7 advantage at the intermission. Watertown trimmed the margin by a basket in the third quarter, but the Lady Cavaliers maintained their lead down the stretch as Maddox made seven of her eight free throws and Whitby tallied 10 of her 14 points in the closing minutes.

Maddox, Whitby, and Ruth Gourley were named to the All-Tournament Team. In the boys division of the event, in which Crockett lost in the semis, Will Dodds was selected.

"I am so sad to see this eighth-grade class move on to the next level, but I am so excited to see what the future holds for them," Turner said. "The sky is the limit for these girls. They are going to do great things in life."

GIRLS CHAMPIONSHIP GAME – FEBRUARY 1

Crockett (38) – Jentry Maddox 20, Addie Whitby 14, Khylee Cobb 2, Haley Leforgee 2, Ruth Gourley 0, Lola Bailey 0, TEAM 13 FG, 9-12 FT. 3-Pointers: Maddox 2, Whitby 1. Record: 20-4.

Watertown (29) – M Willard 7, B Bowers 7, A Aguillard 6, T Estes 6, N Stone 3, E Sells 0, TEAM 11 FG, 4-6 FT. 3-Pointers: Aguillard 2, Stone 1.



Above: Victorious coach Jamar Turner and his leading scorer Jentry Maddox pose with the Haile Tournament gold ball.



Left: Among those selected to the All-Tournament Team were three players from CCMS: Addie Whitby (at left), Ruth Gourley (third from left), and Jentry Maddox (fifth from left).

