

HALLE HOLYFIELD LEADS LADY CAVALIERS TO TWENTIETH VICTORY OF THE SEASON



Above: It was Halle Holyfield's night to shine -- appropriate for Valentine's Day -- as the player who consistently plays with heart and hustle for the Lady Cavs. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

It was highly appropriate that the Lady Cavalier who plays with as much "heart" as anybody should be a standout on Valentine's Day.

Crockett County junior Halle Holyfield - the one who does all the "little things" for Coach Kayla Irvin's squad - sometimes will go an entire game without taking a shot. She concentrates on getting defensive stops, rebounds, assists, steals, and inspiring everyone else with her constant hustle.

Friday night at Newbern, facing host Dyer County in the regular season's final game, Holyfield noticed that her teammates were a bit off-kilter from the opening tip. Miserable shooting throughout the first quarter - against a team that honestly shouldn't give Crockett a close encounter - kept the Lady Cavs from even reaching double figures until Holyfield decided to jump-start the offense.

Her basket at the 1:16 mark gave Crockett an 11-7 advantage and set the stage for a spurt in the second period, when Holyfield netted seven straight Lady Cav points, turning a tie game into a 25-22 edge. When her cousin Keeton Holyfield then knocked down a three, as did freshman Wesley Thornton - who gave Irvin some very solid minutes in this duel - Crockett gained a 32-22 halftime margin.

Holyfield scored five more in the third as the Lady Cavs stretched the lead a bit, and season scoring leader Jordyn Maddox took it from there - finishing with a game-high 18 points - as Crockett improved to 20-6 with a 64-54 win.

It wasn't pretty by any means, and if Crockett doesn't play better next week when the district tournament begins, it could be a short post-season despite the team's impressive record. The girls play Friday night in Newbern against South Gibson.

Holyfield finished with a season-high 14 points, and Irvin's club needed every one of them. Karlee Castellaw added nine (seven in the first quarter), Keeton Holyfield and Amaria Walker seven apiece, and Thornton six. Crockett suffered a setback when reserve post player Kira Bray left with a third-period knee injury, leaving Walker as the only post player healthy as tournament play begins.

In the boys game that followed, the Cavaliers put up another good fight until the game's final two minutes, in which the Choctaws outscored Crockett 13-5 to post a 60-53 triumph. In the frenetic final minute alone, the Cavs had two shots blocked at the rim and missed four three-pointers that didn't even draw iron, despite making 11 of them throughout the contest.

Crockett had taken a 38-35 lead with 1:13 remaining in the third quarter on the strength of an 11-point period by Zay Jones, but the Cavs allowed two Dyer County buckets before the frame ended, including a gut-crushing coast-to-coast layup by Jamin Gauldin in which he ran through the entire Crockett defense to score just before the buzzer.

Still, in the fourth quarter, a triple by Jayden Frye and a muscle layup by Kevin Pledge put Crockett ahead 48-47 with only 2:25 remaining. But Ryker Hayes and Tristan Seabourn netted buckets in the following minute and Jayden Tyler added a pair of free throws with 45.8 ticks left to seal the deal for the hosts. Both teams completed the regular season with 7-19 records, and ironically will meet again Monday night in Newbern to begin the district tournament.

Jones paced Crockett's offense with 21 points, while Cade Freeman produced eight, Preston Lambert seven, and Pledge six. Gauldin had 19 and Seabourn 18 to lead the Choctaws.



Above: Preston Lambert netted seven points for Crockett County and gamely battled in the post against the Choctaws' Tristan Seabourn. (Photo by Ron Barry)

GIRLS - FEBRUARY 14

Crockett (64) – Jordyn Maddox 18, Halle Holyfield 14, Karlee Castellaw 9, Keeton Holyfield 7, Amaria Walker 7, Wesley Thornton 6, Gabby Bursey 3, Kira Bray 0, Ellie Henderson 0, Nyah Cathey 0, TEAM 18 FG, 21-28 FT. 3-Pointers: Maddox 2, Castellaw 1, H Holyfield 1, K Holyfield 1, Bursey 1, Thornton 1. Record: 20-6.

Dyer County (54) – Tykeria Kennedy 13, Allijah Robinson 13, Anitra Honore 11, Molly Roberts 8, Ava Pearson 7, Julie Cogdill 2, Emma Ables 0, Zya Currie 0, Marley Morgan 0, TEAM 22 FG, 6-9 FT. 3-Pointers: Roberts 2, Kennedy 2. Record: 13-12.

BOYS – FEBRUARY 14

Crockett (53) – Zay Jones 21, Cade Freeman 8, Preston Lambert 7, Kevin Pledge 6, Cortland Reddick 5, Squirt Pickens 3, Jayden Frye 3, Grayson Lambert 0, DK Woods 0, Andre Garduno 0, Karson Kail 0, TEAM 19 FG, 4-9. 3-Pointers: Jones 5, Freeman 2, Reddick 1, P Lambert 1, Frye 1, Pickens 1. Record: 7-19.

Dyer County (60) – Jamin Gauldin 19, Tristan Seabourn 18, Devin Hayward 9, Ryker Hayes 9, Jayden Tyler 2, Clay Dodds 2, Pereon Isom 0, Bo Dodds 0, Grant West 0, TEAM 23 FG, 13-19. 3-Pointers: None. Record: 7-19.



Left: A rare sighting -- Halle Holyfield shooting the ball -- was a very welcome sight for Crockett Friday night, as Holyfield's season-high 14 points kept the Lady Cavs atop Dyer County all the way to the final buzzer. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Freshman Wesley Thornton gave Crockett solid minutes -- and six points -- off the bench Friday night in the 64-54 win over Dyer County. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Nyah Cathey's aggressive defense has Lady Choctaw Tykeria Kennedy screaming for help in Friday night's Crockett County win, giving the Lady Cavs a 20-6 regular season record. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Sophomore Jordyn Maddox, who scored a game-high 18 points for the Lady Cavs, drives here against Dyer County defender Ava Pearson. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Karlee Castellaw helped dribble away the final minutes of Crockett's victory at Dyer County. Castellaw scored nine points in the triumph. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Keeton Holyfield and Ellie Henderson have Dyer County's Ava Pearson boxed into the baseline on this drive attempt in Friday night's final regular season game. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: In the boys game, Cade Freeman hits this three-pointer from the left corner to tie the game at 25-all, and then... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Zay Jones (25) had a four-and-a-half-minute stretch in the third period in which he scored 11 of his 21 points, but the hosts defended him well in the final minute to clinch their victory. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: ... hustles downcourt to battle in the post, defending Dyer County skyscraper Tristan Seabourn. Seabourn finished with 18 points to help the Choctaws gain the win. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Squirt Pickens sizes up the defense as the Cavaliers try to make a fourth-quarter comeback against Dyer County. (Photo by Ron Barry)