

LADY CAVS RELEGATED TO DISTRICT TOURNAMENT THIRD-PLACE GAME WEDNESDAY



Above: One consistent bright spot from Monday night's district tournament loss was the play of freshman Wesley Thornton, who scored eight points and gave Crockett several solid minutes off the bench. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Well, the third time wasn't a charm for Crockett County Monday night, but at least it was more charming than the previous two.

Coach Kayla Irvin's Lady Cavaliers – facing the only District 13-AAA team to beat them twice during the regular season – put up a better battle in the squads' third encounter at the district tournament in Newbern, but frigid second-half shooting doomed Crockett to a similar fate in a 48-39 defeat.

That sends Crockett County into Wednesday night's third-place game against host Dyer County, which dropped a 66-45 decision to top-seeded Dyersburg Monday night. Wednesday night's winner will face District 14-AAA runner-up Fayette-Ware when the Region 7-AAA begins; Wednesday's loser will duel 14-AAA champion Haywood.

Crockett certainly had its chances Monday night against the now 24-6 Lady Hornets, who didn't have their best shooting performance either. But when the game entered its final four minutes – with the Lady Cavs still within a possession of South Gibson – nothing went right for them. The Medina school scored 12 of the game's last 15 points.

A bright note for Crockett – and one of the reasons the game was so close – was the performance of freshman Wesley Thornton, seldom-used during much of the regular season. On a night when a few of the starters were having tough times offensively and another encountered foul trouble, Thornton was inserted toward the end of the first quarter and immediately contributed an “and-one” three-point play, cutting South Gibson's lead at the time to 14-11.

In the second period, another Thornton bucket – following a three-pointer by Crockett reserve Ellie Henderson – pulled the Lady Cavs within 21-19 with 4:08 before the intermission. Sophomore Jordyn Maddox then spun in a lay-up and drilled in a three from the top of the key to push Crockett on top 24-21. Over the next 16 minutes, neither team would get more than four points ahead of the other.

While Irvin's squad held a 28-26 halftime edge, points from then on would be few and far-between. SGC ramped up its defense and limited Crockett to only 11 total points after the break. The Lady Cavs' last lead came after a three-pointer by Thornton and a Keeton Holyfield free throw had Crockett up 34-31 with 3:15 remaining in the third period, but a Faith Reed basket with 56 seconds left pushed the Lady Hornets ahead again entering the final frame.

Despite the shooting troubles, Crockett was within a bucket (39-37) with just 4:10 to play after a Maddox field goal and a Halle Holyfield free throw, but almost four minutes would pass before the Lady Cavs got on the board again on a Gabby Bursey layup.

Any serious thoughts of a Lady Cav comeback evaporated when Crockett needed to commit three fouls just to get SGC into a shooting situation in the final two minutes. Maddox, the Lady Cavs' most serious scoring threat, had to take the three fouls herself because no other Crockett player was going after anyone. Unfortunately, the third foul was her fifth of the game, and she had to exit. From that point, Lady Hornets Reed and Karson Dunn sealed the win from the free throw line.

Crockett, which dropped to 20-7 with the loss, was led by Maddox with 12 points. Thornton and Bursey each contributed eight, and Keeton Holyfield added five. South Gibson – showing its usual balance – featured Faith Reed with 13, Dunn and Jade Reed with 10 apiece, Ivy Cianciolo with eight, and Serenity Johnson with six.

Wednesday night's third-place game begins at 6:00 at Dyer County in Newbern. The Lady Cavs will be trying to defeat the Lady Choctaws for the third time this season.

GIRLS - FEBRUARY 24

Crockett (39) – Jordyn Maddox 12, Wesley Thornton 8, Gabby Burse 8, Keeton Holyfield 5, Ellie Henderson 3, Amaria Walker 2, Halle Holyfield 1, Karlee Castellaw 0, TEAM 15 FG, 4-7 FT. 3-Pointers: Burse 2, Thornton 1, Maddox 1, Henderson 1. Record: 20-7.

South Gibson (48) – Faith Reed 13, Karson Dunn 10, Jade Reed 10, Ivy Cianciolo 8, Serenity Johnson 6, Trinity Johnson 1, Anna Teague 0, Ava Owens 0, TEAM 16 FG, 11-17 FT. 3-Pointers: Dunn 2, Cianciolo 2, F Reed 1. Record: 24-6.

Below: The Lady Cavs' Jordyn Maddox wrestles with South Gibson's Jade Reed for control of this ball on the floor as Crockett's Amaria Walker (right) looks on after also diving after it. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Reserve Ellie Henderson is congratulated by senior manager Kinlee Walker (middle) and Keeton Holyfield (right) after nailing a three-pointer early in the second quarter. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Below: Gabby Burse (4), driving here past SGC's Serenity Johnson, netted two three-pointers and scored eight tallies overall for Crockett Monday night. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett cheerleader Lorelai Lipford helps get the Cavalier crowd revved up during a Monday night timeout. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Left: When Wesley Thornton subbed back out late in the first half, she received well-deserved congratulations from teammates Halle Holyfield, Addie Hoover (top), Nyah Cathey, and Audrey Whitby. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett's leading scorer Jordyn Maddox drives around Lady Hornet Trinity Johnson in first-half action from Monday night's district tournament in Newbern. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Lady Cavalier Coach Kayla Irvin -- with assistants Brent Fronabarger and Tyler Gadlen to her right -- tries to figure out a way to unleash her team's offense during Monday night's contest. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett's Karlee Castellaw is covered up by South Gibson's Ivy Cianciolo as she looks for an open teammate in the final minutes of Monday night's 48-39 loss to the Lady Hornets. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: This Gabby Burse layup with less than 25 seconds to play broke a nearly four-minute drought for the Lady Cavaliers, who were neck-and-neck with South Gibson for 30 of the 32 minutes. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: The bright spot to build on from Monday night's defeat could be added confidence for freshman Wesley Thornton, who stepped in and held her own against one of West Tennessee's best teams in South Gibson. (Photo by Ron Barry)