

PIPER WHITE AND "FRESHIE" THORNTON POWER

LADY CAVS TO 19-2 DISTRICT GAME WIN



Above: Piper White has some pop in her bat when she takes a full swing -- as evidenced by the home run she hit to cap off a "cycle" in Crockett's 19-2 thumping of district rival Obion County Friday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

If you're planning to hit for the cycle in a ballgame, it's best to go ahead and get that triple out of the way right off the bat (no pun intended), since that's the rarest of the four hits necessary.

Of course, no one actually "plans" to hit for the cycle. It's one of the most unusual milestones a ballplayer can achieve – mainly because, let's face it: it's hard to do.

It's especially difficult to pull it off if you've honed your career around being a "slap" hitter like Crockett County senior shortstop Piper White. When you're as fast as she is – and you bat left-handed – all signs point to mastering the ability to just pound the ball into the ground and beat the ensuing throw to first base. White does it as well as anyone in West Tennessee; it's earned her an athletic grant to SEC powerhouse Texas A&M in the fall.

But the Lady Cavalier speedster has always had a certain degree of "pop" in her swing, in those rare moments when she's been freed up enough to take a full whack at the ball.

And – again stating the obvious – if you're going to hit for the cycle, one of those hits has to be a home run.

White has actually racked up a few of those this season, but they've all been of the inside-the-park variety, again a testament to her fabulous speed.

Fast forward to Friday afternoon in Troy, Tennessee, where Crockett County was set to take on host Obion County Central in a district softball game. White was the game's opening batter, and she promptly belted a triple to a left-field gap, igniting a two-run rally.

White would bat again in the second inning, with two outs and courtesy runner Fallon Beaird on second base. White did what she does most frequently, drilling a hard ground ball into left field again for a run-scoring single. The hit gave the Lady Cavaliers a 3-0 advantage.

Before a long third-inning rally was over, White played her part in it with a hard grounder into center which she stretched into a double, driving home Piper Smith and Beaird again to make it 8-0, Crockett. And she was three-fourths of the way to a cycle – but the home run remained.

Coach Baron Jimmerson's club got another rally going in the fourth, so White came to bat again with two outs and two runners on. She promptly lined a sharp single to left, driving in Smith again to make the score 12-1. The inning would end with the Lady Cavs up by 15-1, so a "mercy rule" early ending was nearing a possibility.

And in the fifth, Crockett rallied enough to push the margin to 18-2 on a Beaird groundout that drove in Smith. It was the second out; no one was remaining on the base paths.

It was White's turn to step to the plate again. At this point, it would seem sort of pointless to just slap the ball toward the left side again, right?

The senior sandwiched ball one with a couple of fouls, so the count went to 1-and-2. So... why not? White slammed the next pitch well over the center-field fence for a solo homer – and, naturally, the cycle.

Crockett won the contest 19-2, and White had a stat line for the ages: 5-for-5, 5 RBIs, 11 total bases, 4 runs scored, 3 stolen bases... and 1 cycle (augmented by an extra single).

Here's an equally amazing fact from the game: White's heroics barely exceeded those of her middle infield partner Wesley Thornton, whom White calls her "freshie" – because she's just a ninth-grader. But in this same game, Thornton drilled a single, a double, and her fifth home run of the season – all over the fence – and matched White's 5 RBIs and 3 stolen bases. On any other day, a game like that would be all the rage.

But there were others too. Hannah Carter went 3-for-4, scored twice, drove in two, and stole three sacks. Madison Solis had two hits and two RBIs. Smith and Beaird each scored three times and drove in a run. Madison Stitts collected two hits. The Lady Cavs totaled 18 hits and 15 steals in running their season record to 16-4 and their district mark to 2-0.

Freshman Emmalynn Medlin recorded the pitching win, allowing just one earned run in three innings of work. Syesha Torres completed the final two frames, also yielding just one additional tally.

The win sets the state for a huge district battle Monday at Medina against South Gibson, Jimmerson's former school before accepting the Crockett coaching position this season.



Above: "Freshie" Wesley Thornton matched Piper White's five RBIs, three stolen bases, and home run Friday, also drilling two other hits as the Lady Cavs rolled over the Lady Rebels. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Hannah Carter posted another big outing with three hits, three steals, two RBIs, and two runs scored for the victorious Lady Cavs, who are now 16-4. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Crockett first baseman Piper Smith seemed to be on base every time Piper White came up, because the senior shortstop brought her home three times in the contest Friday. (Photo by Ron Barry)

